

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CS/25/13

## Community Planning and Partnership Working in Caithness and Sutherland

### Report by the Corporate Manager

#### Summary

This report summarises the work of three key partnerships in Caithness and Sutherland and asks Members to consider their work in light of the current review of community planning arrangements taking place in Highland.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware, from the Single Outcome Agreement report presented to Highland Council on 27 June 2013, that a review of community planning arrangements in Highland is currently taking place. The review proposes an approach that meets the public service reform agenda; builds on current arrangements; and links to each partner's governance and accountability arrangements. Progress on this will be reported to the Highland Public Services Partnership Performance Board (the Board) later this year.
- 1.2 The Board has proposed a strategic framework that will ensure strength of leadership and accountability, whilst embedding the ability of partners to both challenge and support to ensure best practice and measurable progress.
- 1.3 In line with the strategic framework, further work is being carried out by each strategic lead partner on the Board to map the local community planning arrangements at the operational level. This will include consideration of what is needed to deliver results and also the ability of existing groups to deliver and, if appropriate, be integrated into local community planning arrangements.
- 1.4 Members will recall that in August 2012 a report was presented to the Area Committee outlining the work and achievements of three of the key partnerships in Caithness and Sutherland. It was agreed at that time that an annual update would be provided (as outlined in section 2 of this report).

## 2. Key Local Partnerships

### 2.1 Caithness Partnership

- 2.1.1 Members will recall that the Caithness Partnership (CP), which includes members from across the public and private sector, had evolved into a community planning and development partnership. The CP worked up a three year Caithness Community Development Programme with key themes around Economy, Learning, Health, Community Councils, Transport, Heritage and Safety. It has now successfully completed that Programme funded by the

2.1.2 In August 2012, Members were advised that work was in progress to try and secure continued funding for the CP. This proved very difficult, so in parallel with this process, the Corporate Manager facilitated a workshop with the CP that considered each of the key themes and whether the work was being or could be carried out by others. The results of this review for each theme are summarised below:

- Economy – best served by both the Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership and Caithness Chamber of Commerce;
- Learning – Highland Council along with North Highland College and Pultneytown Peoples Project takes the lead;
- Health – best led by the new Caithness District Partnership;
- Caithness Community Councils;
- Improving Transport – Caithness Chamber of Commerce has taken over the running of the Transport Forum which was seen as one of the key functions to continue. The Chamber was already co-ordinating the Wick/John O' Groats airport consultative committee;
- Heritage – a number of organisations have taken a lead role in the heritage of Caithness including Wick and Thurso Heritage Societies and Caithness Horizons;
- Safety – the Community Safety Action Team continues to operate with Police Scotland taking the lead, partnered by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Highland Council. Third Sector representation at these meetings is provided by the Caithness Voluntary Group.

2.1.3 Close working with partners has enabled the CP to deliver a programme of significant work around key themes and despite loss of funding it continues to support delivery through its partner groups/agencies.

2.1.4 As the local arrangements for Community Planning are reviewed and the leads for each of the themed groups seek to identify how the plans will be delivered, it will be necessary for the CP and its work to be considered in that context e.g. how well does it help to deliver the Single Outcome Agreement outcomes around economic growth and recovery, safer communities and so on.

## 2.2 Sutherland Partnership

2.2.1 Members will recall that the Sutherland Partnership (SP) is a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Partnership Board comprising 20 members including Sutherland Highland Council Members, who were appointed by Area Committee in August 2012. Cllr Jim McGillivray is the current Chair (the Chair is re-elected every two years). The Committee is asked to note that Cllr Linda Munro resigned from the Partnership on 3 June 2013.

2.2.2 Historically the SP employed a Development Officer to assist in delivering the partnership's priorities and at the time of reporting last year efforts were being

made to identify other funding sources to extend the post for a further two or three years from March 2013. However long term funding has not been sourced and the post was extended with a small amount of Highland Council support until the end of June 2013 to complete outstanding LEADER claims, after which the Development Officer was made redundant.

- 2.2.3 In parallel, SP, at the behest of the Board of Directors, conducted a review of the objectives and activities of the Partnership similar to the exercise conducted by Caithness Partnership. The Corporate Manager facilitated the review to help identify which activities tied in with the priorities of partners (as identified in the Single Outcome Agreement) and whether any of these were (or should be) delivered by partners or other agencies.
- 2.2.4 The outcome of the review was subsequently discussed at the SP Board Meeting in May 2013 where it was agreed to maintain the Partnership for the following purposes:
- to enable New Futures Sutherland (11 P/T employees) to continue to operate (this supports the priority of employment, but also contributes to other outcomes such as reduction of health inequalities);
  - as a central point for partners operating in Sutherland to meet and discuss issues, priorities and potential joint working on an as needs basis;
  - as a vehicle for potential future projects, including the next round of LEADER, if appropriate.
- 2.2.5 It was also agreed that the SP would enter a period of minimal activity, and partners would reflect on the future direction of the Partnership. It was further agreed that Voluntary Groups East Sutherland would deal with the company administration.
- 2.2.6 Areas that may be considered for further direction include:
- local delivery and/or coordination of SOA-related activity – this could be tied in to the review of the local Community planning arrangements referred to earlier in this report;
  - host an annual meeting/ get together for partners to discuss Sutherland-wide issues, priorities and activities;
  - support for community buyouts and other development trust initiatives;
  - preparing for the next round of LEADER

### 2.3. Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership

- 2.3.1 The information outlined below provides an update on the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNRSP), covering the period since August 2012. It also builds upon a review of the Partnership presented to the full Highland Council in May 2013: a copy of this paper can be viewed at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8CBBAFA4-8A9B-4922-B893-974821C35C60/0/Item22HC1213.pdf>
- 2.3.2 The purpose of the programme of work is to move the area economy from dependence upon Dounreay-related work to a broader more sustainable economy. During the past year significant progress has been made, both with key enabling infrastructure and support to employment opportunities:

- during financial year 2012/13 local companies created or retained 127.5 full-time equivalent jobs, with a further 55 since April 2013;
- Phase 1 of the Scrabster Harbour Trust's port development project was completed, with significant interest already being expressed from energy sector businesses. Norwegian company Norsesea Group has signed an agreement with the Trust to develop a major oil & gas supply base at Scrabster, and Norsesea Group has also signed a partnership agreement with local company Simpson's of Wick to support logistics. Further phases of work are under active discussion with CNSRP partners;
- NDA and HIE funding of £0.45 million was approved to Wick Harbour Authority to allow the first phase of its development plans to be implemented. Further phases of work are under active discussion with CNSRP partners;
- CNSRP partner HIE has procured BT to deliver the rollout of superfast broadband across the Highlands & Islands. Detailed timetables for delivery are not yet available, but the rollout will benefit communities across Caithness and Sutherland;
- the first intake of engineering apprentices at the £9M Engineering, Technology & Energy Centre at North Highland College commenced their training in September 2012;
- applications for consent to develop offshore Tidal and Wind developments off the coasts of Caithness and East Sutherland have been submitted to Marine Scotland by Meygen Ltd, Moray Offshore Renewables Ltd and Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd.
- Caithness Chamber of Commerce continued to make good progress with its "Make The Right Connections" workforce transition programme, with funding support from European Social Fund, NDA and Skills Development Scotland. The Chamber also led a successful "Jobs and How to Get Them" event, attracting over 30 exhibitors and over 300 attendees. DSRL – in association with North Highland College, STEM North and local employers - also ran a successful "Ready, Steady, Work" programme in summer 2013 for 4th, 5th and 6th year students to enhance their work-readiness;
- the latest phase of the tourism development by Natural Retreats at John O'Groats is expected to officially open in September 2013. The Lodges on the site, which opened for business in 2012, have attracted encouraging levels of business, and have raised the profile of the area in the national and international media. The development has been supported by both HIE and Highland Council;
- Wick John O' Groats airport has enjoyed significant additional traffic following the decision of Chevron to fly oil workers to north sea fields via Wick whilst Aberdeen-based helicopters are grounded;
- funding from CNSRP partners Highland Council and NDA, as well as from Transport Scotland, has allowed final feasibility and design work to be undertaken for the proposed trunk road improvements at Berriedale Brae.

2.3.3 In terms of its future direction, significant job losses at the Dounreay site are expected to take place around 2018/19, so the next 3-4 year period will be crucial in creating sustainable economic opportunities for the area. Discussions are currently taking place on how best to ensure that the success

of the partnership approach to date can be built upon. DSRL has indicated its willingness to support CNSRP for a further 3 year period beyond March 2014

### **3. Implications**

- 3.1 There are no known resource, legal, climate change, risk or equality implications as a result of this report

#### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to:

- i. note the achievements of the three key partnership groups, as outlined in the report; and
- ii. consider the work of the three partnerships in light of the current review of community planning arrangements taking place in Highland

Designation Corporate Manager

Date 8 August 2013

Authors Helen Ross, Senior Ward Manager  
Andy Mackay, Ward Manager, North West and Central Sutherland  
David Sutherland, Ward Manager, Caithness Wards  
Phil Tomalin, Ward Manager, East Sutherland and Edderton  
Eann Sinclair,