



CNSRP ADVISORY/ EXECUTIVE BOARDS JOINT MEETING

11th June 2013, Norseman Hotel, Wick

Attendees: Cllr Drew Hendry (Chair), Cllr Thomas Prag, Trudy Morris (CCoC), Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), Seonag Campbell (SDS), Stuart Black (HC), June Love (DSRL/HIE), Roy Kirk (HIE), David Sutherland (HC), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP), Alastair MacDonald (Babcock), Fiona Bruce (CNSRP - minutes), David Flear (DSG), John Robertson (Crown Estate), Ken Nicol (DSRL), Ronnie Johnston (DSG), Sam Fox (NDA), Anna MacConnell (NDA), Cllr George Farrow, Cllr Gail Ross, George MacDonald (CVG), Lesley Cranna (SNH), Bill Baxter (Caithness Chamber of Commerce), William Sutherland (HIAL), Susan Johnson (Job Centre Plus)

Apologies: Cllr Roger Saxon, Frances Gunn (Sutherland Partnership), Gordon Jenkins (NHC), Steven Sutherland (CCoC), Billy Manson (Association of Caithness Community Councils), Yvonne Hendry (Caithness Voluntary Group)

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting, followed by round the table introductions.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted, by those members present, as a true record of the previous meeting.

3. PRESENTATION - SCOTLAND'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Lesley Cranna provided an update on Marine Protected Areas (MPA's), specifically MPA's on the Caithness coastline – see Appendix 1. The MPA's will go through a formal period of consultation during summer 2013. Options for MPA's will be sent to Marine Scotland in November 2013, with a report presented to Parliament in December 2013. A ministerial announcement is expected in July 2013 which will start the formal 16 week consultation process. MPA drop in sessions will be held in Wick on 27th August and Thurso on 29th August.

4. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

Programme Summary

E Sinclair provided a brief summary of the Programme Managers Update, highlighting the following:

- An agreement has been signed between Scrabster Harbour Trust and NorSea Group to create an oil and gas supply base at Scrabster. NorSea Group have also signed their first strategic working partnership with local logistics firm Hugh Simpson Ltd.
- 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).
- HIE has procured BT to deliver the roll out of Next Generation Broadband across the Highlands and Islands.
- The CNSRP partners' priority projects for the coming period are the development of the business/industrial park at Scrabster, the attraction of offshore wind operations base at Wick Harbour and an inward investment in the marine energy sector.

CNSRP Draft Annual Review

In summary the Advisory Board members agreed that the Draft Annual Report content was suitable and easy to digest in terms of content. The tone of the report should help increase public confidence in future employment/business opportunities in Caithness and North Sutherland. The messaging is clear that Caithness & North Sutherland is open for business.

The Advisory Board asked for the following amendments/additions to the draft Annual Review:

- Add a section about Natural Retreats and the redevelopment of John O'Groats.
- An electronic version should also be made available through the CNSRP website and social media links.
- There should be a section included asking for feedback.

Once update it is hoped that the CNSRP Annual Review will be issued during July 2013. A press release will be issued to coincide and partners were asked to keep repeating the key messages.

ACTION 1 – E Sinclair to work on revised version of CNSRP Annual Review.

SCDI Event – London

The SCDI Dinner in London was sponsored by Babcock, supported by HIE and Highland Council. Feedback from those who did attend was that it was good to see how proactive the partnership is being, they had not realised the potential opportunities that existed within Caithness and North Sutherland.

Lessons have been learned from this event, and changes will be made when organising similar events in the future.

5. INWARD INVESTMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

Following feedback from the recent SCDI Dinner Roy Kirk and June Love will be taking time out each month to physically meet potential inward investors and brief them on the opportunities that exist in Caithness & North Sutherland. Contacts made at the SCDI Dinner are being followed up. Positive discussions are being held in terms of tidal energy.

The Caithness Ambassadors list is currently being reviewed and updated.

A £146M contract has been signed with BT for the roll out of Next Generation Broadband across the Highlands. It is anticipated that Caithness will be at the forefront of work being undertaken and that significant improvements will be made in terms of connectivity. Questions were asked about increased 3G coverage across the Highlands, it was noted that 4G will make a significant difference to 95% of Scotland as it is on a lower frequency and more easily available.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

Association of Caithness Community Councils

There was no representative available to attend.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber are due to host a networking and 'meet the buyer' event on behalf of SSE in June 2013. SSE will also have some of their Tier 2 suppliers in attendance for the 'meet the buyer' event.

A survey about how the loss of the Inverness/Gatwick link will affect businesses has been circulated to the Chamber Members. A survey on the Scottish Referendum has also been circulated to members.

Concerns have been raised by Caithness Transport Forum with regard to timescales for the Berriedale Braes improvements. Highland Council agreed to provide additional support to try and move this project forward and reaffirmed their commitment to finding an affordable solution. Lesley Cranna advised that Scottish Natural Heritage will be happy to engage at an early stage on any environmental aspects if this will assist progress.

Caithness Voluntary Group/ CVS North

It was noted that the Caithness Voluntary Group AGM is due to be held on 28th August 2013.

Crown Estate

Work continues to support the development of wave and tidal projects in the Pentland Firth and Orkney waters. Discussions are ongoing to try and understand the

infrastructure and resources required to support these wave and tidal projects, it is expected that more accurate projections will be available later this year.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group

Similar concerns were raised by the DSG in relation to progress on the Berridale Brae project. The DSG are pleased that positive discussion as being held about the potential use of the Georgemas Railhead for the transportation of commercial freight. A meeting is scheduled for 3rd July to meet with the National Nuclear Archives Project Team. Discussions are ongoing with DSRL to see how socio economic benefit can be included in future procurement negotiations.

R Johnstone advised that this would be his last meeting and that D Flear would take his place as DSG representative at future meetings. Cllr D Hendry thanked R Johnstone for his support on behalf of the CNSRP Advisory Board.

DSRL/NDA/BDP

DSRL has commissioned a report to measure the impact of its socio economic intervention. As above DSRL are working on the development of socio economic clauses within future procurement. Positive feedback has been received from the local schools on the impact of STEM activities during the last three years. Benefits have been reported by both pupils and teaching staff.

A MacDonald is continuing to support Wick Harbour Authority understand the future business opportunities in the oil and gas industry. Research is being conducted to realise potential opportunities worldwide in Fast Reactor knowledge. Working with HIE to gain a better understanding of the labour market intelligence. A contract has been awarded to Liddell Thompson to provide advice and support in terms of marketing Caithness both internally and externally.

NDA along with HIE are working with Wick Harbour Authority to secure funding for Phase 1 & 2. Caithness Archaeology Trust has published a review of the activities they have undertaken, they have also produced a 5 year forward look programme. The NDA will be involved in the National Nuclear Archives meeting on 3rd July 2013. The sessions will focus on what socio economic benefit can be included in contracts associated with this project.

Highland Council

Forward planning for the Caithness & Sutherland local plan is currently being undertaken. It was reported that Business Gateway have a good pipeline of activities ongoing. HC have provided funding for North Highland Initiative to showcase a Highland Food Tent at the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh. It was noted that HC is making significant investment in Caithness i.e. New Schools, New Council Offices, Town Hall Upgrades and New Children's Home.

HIAL

Wick John O'Groats has seen a significant increase in passenger numbers since the start of the Chevron contract. Discussions about office space, engineering support and possible larger helicopter usage are ongoing.

A note of thanks was made to CNSRP Partners for their support in securing new business opportunities at the Airport.

It was made clear that infrastructure is key to securing new business and retaining early morning flights.

North Highland College

There was no representative available to attend.

Scrabster Harbour Trust

There was no representative available to attend.

Scottish Natural Heritage

L Cranna offered support from SNH to help market the area in terms on environmental aspects. It was noted that 2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland, a series of events are planned to mark this – a list of all events/activities can be found on the SNH website.

Skills Development Scotland

School leaver statistics have improved over the last 12 months with high numbers of school leavers moving into further education or employment. The employability fund is now open and available, contact points locally are North Highland College and Pulteneytown People's Project. PACE events have taken place for those affected by the Ictech situation. Some work has been undertaken on work readiness opportunities, this is similar to work experience. A study is currently being conducted into the reasons why people leave modern apprenticeship schemes.

Job Centre Plus

There are currently 700 people claiming Job Seekers allowance at Wick Job Centre Plus. Discussions about getting more mature people back into employment. Job Centre Plus are looking at work experience options to try and encourage this group of people back into employment. They are also working with employers to try and understand what skills they need and what the skills gaps are.

Thurso & Wick Trades Council

Representatives from the Thurso & Wick Trades Council attended the STUC in Perth. They will continue to send out positive stories/responses to some of the recent negative local headlines.

Wick Harbour Authority

There was no representative available to attend

7. JOINT MEETING WITH CNSRP EXECUTIVE BOARD

Executive Board members Sir Anthony Cleaver, Anthony Standing (SDS), Alex Paterson (HIE), Alistair Dodds (THC), Karen Jackson (Scottish Government), Nigel Lowe (NDA), and Roger Hardy (BDP) joined the meeting at this point.

The following topics were raised with the Executive Board:

Communications/PR

More stories about progress with activities need to be forwarded to the local press to maintain local confidence but stories also need to be fed into the national press to let the business world know that Caithness is open for business. Sir Anthony Cleaver advised that he met with John Swinney MSP recently and that he was very complimentary of what has been achieved in the area through partnership working. Mr Swinney said that CNSRP is a sterling example that has lessons for other areas of the country. It was agreed that a foreword contributed by John Swinney, MSP will be added to the CNSRP Annual Review.

It was noted that there are a lot of good stories in the press about work that is ongoing in the area to boost the economy and attractiveness of Caithness as a destination. The 'This is Caithness' supplement that was distributed with the local press captured a number of positive business/social aspects of what Caithness has to offer.

ACTION 2 - Eann to work with Karen Jackson on foreword for the CNSRP Annual Review.

Superfast Broadband

Alex Paterson said that the timetable for the roll-out of superfast broadband will be available late summer 2013. On completion of the roll-out 84% of Highland Region will have access to super fast broadband, and other work is being undertaken to support the 16% that will not be covered. Superfast Broadband will allow the Highlands and Islands to compete effectively in the digital economy, creating employment opportunities in a range of disciplines.

Future of the Partnership

The current mandate for the CNSRP Partnership runs until March 2014. Whilst no decision has been taken yet on its future, it is hoped that those who currently fund the partnership will continue to do so. Karen Jackson said that feedback from Scottish Government is that it remains committed to supporting CNSRP. Alistair Dodds said that he felt the Executive Board had seen real benefits from the partnership working developed through CNSRP, and that the Partnership should continue.

8. AOB

Cllr Drew Hendry highlighted that this would be Alistair Dodds' last CNSRP meeting before he retires in August. All members paid tribute to Alistair's key role in supporting

the development and ongoing operation of the Partnership, and wished him well in retirement.

Summary of Actions:

	Action:	Lead:	Due Date:	Status:
1	Revise Annual Review text	ES	01/07/13	
2	Work with K. Jackson, Scottish Govt re: Ministerial Foreword to Annual Review	ES	01/07/13	