

CNSRP Advisory Board – October 2014 meeting – approved minute



CNSRP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

2nd October 2014
Norseman Hotel, Wick

Attendees: Cllr Gail Ross (Chair), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP), David Flear (DSG), Stuart Black (THC), Roy Kirk (HIE), Trudy Morris (CCoC), Alastair Ferrier (SDS), Sian Wilson (Crown Estate), June Love (HIE), Billy Manson (Assoc of Caithness Community Councils), Sandy Mackie (SHT), Ken Nicol (DSRL), Willie Watt (WHA), William Sutherland (HIAL).

Apologies: Cllr Drew Hendry, Frances Gunn (CVS North), Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), John Thurso MP, Lesley Cranna (SNH), Rob Gibson MSP, Cllr Roger Saxon, Cllr George Farlow, John Robertson (Crown Estate), David Sutherland (THC), Seonag Campbell (SDS), Shirley Baker (JobCentre Plus), George MacDonald (CVG), Donald Macbeath (NHC-UHI), Anna MacConnell (NDA)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Since the last meeting MeyGen has reached financial closure for its project in the Inner Sound of the Pentland Firth, and this has given a welcome boost to the local economy through the award of a major contract to JGC Engineering.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

ES outlined an updated Roles and Responsibilities paper (circulated) which set the terms of reference for each of the Partnership groups, and a general principle covering governance and declarations of interest. He asked members if they were content for this paper to supercede the previous version issued in 2011 (covering the 2011-14 period). TM highlighted concerns expressed by both Scrabster Harbour Trust and Caithness Chamber following a discussion at the previous Advisory Board meeting. This had left Chamber members unsure of their position on the Advisory Board.

After discussion round the table it was generally agreed that the principle of declaring interests would avoid situations where discussions could become confused. Members therefore agreed to adopt the paper as the working document.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

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Eann Sinclair highlighted the following items from the update report:

- So far this year companies have committed to 107 full-time equivalent jobs (75 new and 32 retained)
- Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd (BOWL) has announced that Wick Harbour will be its preferred location for an operation & maintenance base.
- A new hangar has been opened at Wick JOG airport

4. INWARD INVESTMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

June Love provided an update on the activities that have been undertaken since the last meeting. The following items were of note:

The Scottish Cabinet visited Caithness in July. It was good to announce that PSS (Process Safety Solutions) had decided to relocate part of their business to Caithness, and to have John Swinney MSP open the facility. The Company have taken a lease on one the units in the Wick business park and it is their intention to grow this side of the business with up to 30 people over the next three years.

Two generic brochures were produced – oil & gas and renewables. Three proposition documents were also produced following discussion with companies who have expressed an interest in gathering more information on what the area has to offer.

We continue to focus on Energy and Business Services and are currently speaking with around 20 companies – of varying interests.

The events calendar continues to be developed. Local representatives have just come back from an event held in Aberdeen in conjunction with Subsea UK. This event promoted the opportunities of working from Caithness for the oil and gas sector for West of Shetland and Northern North Seas.

As a follow on from the Subsea UK event we are also planning a Caithness Day on the 28th October where companies from outwith the area have been invited to visit the area. This is to allow those interested to see at first-hand the opportunities in the area and meet with existing companies already operating from here.

5. MEMBER UPDATES

Caithness Chamber of Commerce

- The Make The Right Connections programme is due to end in December. An external audit is to take place.
- Chamber continues to work with HIE to understand the roll out programme for Next Generation Broadband, and to work with businesses to maximise the potential for usage of improved connectivity.
- The NHRF AGM takes place in November, and for the second year will feature a Young Enterprise competition with team from local High Schools and College.
- Chamber is working on initiative to take forward the elements of the Wood Report on oil & gas that focus on young people.

Caithness Voluntary Group/CVS North

There were no representatives available to attend the meeting.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group

- Work continues on the decommissioning re-profiling and a full presentation on the extent of this will be provided to DSG in December.
- A presentation from DSRL was provided at our last DSG meeting on Dounreay's socio economic activities. The presentation is available on the stakeholder group's website.
- The NDA continues to progress the National Nuclear Archives - out to tender on construction.
- DSG, in partnership with the Caithness Transport Forum, continues to hold dialogue with Direct Rail Services and look forward to hearing later this year about progress with commercial freight options on the Far North Line.
- A DSG representative will now be involved in early discussions with both NDA and DSRL on socio economic funding enquiries/applications.
- DSRL and HIE are currently in discussions about off-site accommodation for some of the workforce. More detail will be available following the publication of the new decommissioning programme.

DSRL/NDA/BDP

- DSRL is working on its contribution to the CNSRP programme
- DSRL and NDA have provided support to Caithness Chamber to enable it to provide support to some local businesses.
- The Ready, Steady, Work programme was successfully run this summer, with all participants achieving positive results.

Highland Council

- The local development plan for the area is expected to be ready by September 2014, it will go out for consultation in October.
- Business Gateway has supported 24 business start-ups to date this year, with 17 in Caithness and 7 in Sutherland.

Crown Estate

- Crown Estate welcomes the MeyGen project announcement, which has attracted Crown Estate support.
- Crown Estate has signed a Memorandum of Understanding on education with the University of the Highlands & Islands.

HIAL

- The new helicopter hangar is now operational, with HIAL, NHV and Chevron support. The current Chevron contract is due to end soon.
- The airport has two newly-qualified air-traffic controllers, giving a welcome boost to the airport's capabilities.

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- Progress continues with the development of landing capabilities at Wick JOG, through procedures for the GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System).

HIE

- There is an increased level of optimism amongst existing businesses (eg. The new ownership at Denchi Power and AGM Batteries).
- Business sites and properties in the area are being considered as part of the
- A creative industries strategy for the area is being developed.

North Highland College

There was no representative available to attend the meeting.

Scrabster Harbour Trust

- It has been a year of steady progress so far, with fishing revenues in particular up by 30%. Iceland's Eimskip has commenced weekly cargoes to the port.
- The fish market has been upgraded, with toilet facilities for harbour users such as yachts etc.
- The MeyGen announcement is good news for the Harbour as well as the wider area. The Trust will continue to work with commercial interest to prioritise developments.
- The Jubilee Quay was officially opened by Lord Lt. Anne Dunnett.
- The general marketing message (highlighted at the Subsea UK event in Aberdeen) is of an area with a joined-up, can-do approach to opportunities.

Wick Harbour Authority

- The heavy-lift pad on the Commercial Quay (jointly supported by NDA and HIE) is complete, giving capability both North and South of Wick river.
- Harbour itself is busy, with a range of cargoes (eg. Timber, Subsea 7)
- Continue to work with BOWL and MORL. Overall aspiration is for up to 300 jobs by 2018.
- Further studies going on to support future infrastructure development (eg recent wave test modelling)

Scottish Natural Heritage

There was no representative available to attend the meeting.

Skills Development Scotland

There was no representative available to attend the meeting.

Job Centre Plus

There was no representative available to attend the meeting.

Thurso & Wick Trades Council

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There was no representative available to attend the meeting.

6. AOB

The Chairman thanked the members for attending.

Date of Next meeting

10.30am, Wednesday 10th December 2014, at T3UK, Janetstown, by Thurso