

The Highland Council
Caithness Committee – 31st August 2016

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	CC/13/16

Developing Local Priorities for Caithness (Caithness Vision)

Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on the local strategic priorities for Caithness.

1. Background

- 1.1 Building on the localism agenda and increased delegation of decision making to local committees, each local committee was asked by the Leader to consider developing a set of strategic Council priorities for their area.
- 1.2 It is important to note that these are Council priorities and that there will be opportunity, through the development of local community partnerships, to consider wider shared priorities at a later date.

2. Developing the Caithness Vision

- 2.1 The Chair of the committee contacted all Caithness Members by e-mail on 2nd June 2016 with his initial thoughts and asked for any comments/additions/deletions. At that time members were asked to consider:
- Local priorities for their own ward,
 - Priorities that are common throughout Caithness,
 - Priorities that reflect the geographical diversity of Caithness
- 2.2 Members were also asked to distinguish between Council priorities and those that would need partnership discussion and agreement. Council priorities might for example be around harbours, tourism, biosphere, roads, transport, participatory budgeting.
- 2.3 This was followed by a discussion at the members briefing meeting on 27th June 2016. No amendments were tabled and the agreed Caithness local priorities are now as shown on appendix 1.

3. Implications

- 3.1 There are no immediate resource, legal, equalities, Climate Change/Carbon Clever Gaelic or rural implications in the report. However the Vision sets out ambitions which would have a positive impact on many of these themes.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider and agree these as the priorities for Caithness.

Designation: Michelle Morris, Depute Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Development

Date: 28th July 2016

Author: Alex Macmanus, Ward Manager (Caithness Wards)

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – A Vision for Caithness, land of the Norse Yarls

A Vision for Caithness, Land of the Norse Yarls



We are committed to working in partnership with others to improve the health and wellbeing of Caithness citizens.

- City/Region Deal – Continually challenge the City/Region deal to lever in infrastructure investment, improve connectivity and enhance the skills of our workforce.
- Infrastructure for Growth – We will work with our partners in the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership and the Dounreay Stakeholder Group to create and retain jobs to replace those lost through the decommissioning of Dounreay.
- Area Promotion – We will work with partners to enhance visitor experience by seeking to deliver further attractions including the John o’Groats trail, North Highland Way, North Coast 500 route and the Pictish trail. We will work with partners to improve the number of visiting cruise ships at Scrabster and develop Caithness as the Surf Capital of the Highlands. We will work to develop the potential of our archaeology, geology and wildlife as visitor attractions.
- Wick and Thurso Town Centres – We will work with our partners, using the principles of Scotland’s Towns Partnership to ensure they are ‘Attractive, Active and Accessible’ and deliver town centre Wi-Fi and other projects.
- Health and Wellbeing – Working with our partners we will progress the delivery of sports facilities for Thurso and Wick as part of our aim of promoting Caithness as a great place to live, work and visit. We will also explore options for a transport schemes so that all can benefit from these facilities. We will work with the District Partnership to fully integrate health and social services and to protect and enhance facilities at Caithness General hospital.
- Transport - Working with our Caithness Transport Forum partners we will work to improve connectivity via A9/ A99 improvements, the Far North rail Line and Wick – John o’Groats airport. We also will aim to make our town and village communities safer by introducing and expanding 20mph zones.
- Social Equality - Working with our partners we will seek public sector infrastructure investment and training opportunities in our deprived communities to create jobs and improve quality of life.
- Education - We will work with North Highland College UHI to develop the presence of the Environmental Research Institute and Engineering Technology and Energy Centre to enhance options for the retention of young people and encourage sector growth in local industries.