



CNSRP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

29th January 2018
Pentland Hotel, Thurso

Attendees: Cllr Alasdair Christie, THC (AC - Chair); Stuart Black, THC (SB); Eann Sinclair, CNSRP (ES); Frances Gunn, CVS North (FG); William Sutherland HIAL, (WS); Tracy Ligema, NHS Highland (TL); Sandy Mackie Scrabster, Harbour Trust (SM); Willie Watt, Wick Harbour Authority (WW); Roger Saxon, Dounreay Stakeholder Group (RS); Derrick Milnes, T&WTC (DM); Cathy Souter CNSRP Administrator (CS – Minutes).

Apologies: Alex MacManus HC; Allan Tait CVG; Cllr. Kirsteen Currie; Kristin Scott SNH; Ian Mitchell, SNH; Donald MacBeath UHI; Stephen Sheridan, Skills Development Scotland; Billy Manson, Assoc of Caithness Community Councils.

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1b. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minute of the previous meeting was accepted as a true record of the previous meeting by those members present.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

Skills Investment Plan

ES apologised for the lack of a presentation on the Caithness & North Sutherland Skills Investment Plan, but Stephen Sheridan, who was due to make the presentation, was off sick.

ES issued copies of the draft report from Ekos. The draft provides good background information on issues and potential themes, but local partners agree it does not yet address the “action plan” element required. ES continues to discuss the way forward with senior Skills Development Scotland staff.

AC – Agreed that the action plan was the most important element here. On recruitment, we must be more clever, smarter. We must think of spouses, they should be included. There must be communication between shared services, Council and the NHS. They all need to come together. TL commented that availability of housing was a related issue to recruitment.

ES – This was the same sentiment from the CNSRP Executive Board at its recent meeting. **ACTION 1 – ES** to update members on action plan at next meeting.

Offshore wind

ES – this is currently sitting on Amber due to a delay in commencing the work on mapping supply chain opportunities. HIE is working directly with Anna Cofta, SSE Contracts, to move this forward. Construction (onshore and offshore) on Beatrice project is going well.

WW – It’s hoped that the first generation of power from BOWL will commence by July. It’s good to see the arrival of the crane in Wick harbour to support construction of pontoons. BOWL and Siemens staff recruitment has continued.

WW – Visits from Moray East representatives have taken place.

Tidal

ES – At the last Advisory Board meeting members heard that Atlantis Resources did not get approval for its bid to BEIS for a Contract for Difference for the MeyGen project. ARL continues discussions with BEIS. CNSRP Chair Sir Anthony Cleaver has also met with the UK Govt Minister responsible to make the case for support. ES also reported discussions with Crown Estate Scotland, who also have interest in the MeyGen project. Meanwhile HIE has – with support from Dounreay Socio-economic Board - commissioned work to support ARL with the development of an operations & maintenance strategy for the MeyGen project. WW – this would be a massive loss to Caithness if not taken up. We don’t want to lose this opportunity.

UKVL

ES – This is presently sitting at Amber on the Dashboard. It is dependent on a funding decision from UK Space Agency. HIE continues to develop the Business Case. SM – will HIE effectively be the project promoter for this project? ES – As currently planned, yes. RS – Shetland are moving quickly now with Shetland Spaceport Ltd. And W. Isles/ Prestwick are also getting attention. Will Sutherland receive support from HIE/ NDA? ES – Business Case for Sutherland is being finalised, and discussions with UKSA will continue. HIE has had discussions with NDA regarding potential for support. JSB – the Sutherland site seems to suffer from being in a non-disclosure situation, but it’s important that people can be kept in touch with the overall concept. This would benefit

from an update to Sutherland County Committee. **ACTION 2 – JSB** to arrange update presentation to Sutherland Area Committee.

WW wondered about the added cost of operating from Shetland/ W Isles.

ES – The above three out of the six projects HIE put forward to DSEB under CNSRP programme have received offers of financial support. They all have project management or consultancy support. Three have not yet been approved due to outstanding questions over project scopes. ES is due to meet again with the DSEB in February and an update will be given.

Nuclear Services

Nuclear Services is led by Roy Kirk. He continues to discuss future employment plans at Vulcan with MoD/ Rolls Royce. Cavendish Nuclear plans are still possible, but are likely to fall outside the scope of the 2017-2020 programme due to changes in the decommissioning timescales. The scope of work here is currently being reviewed, in particular to address issues about Labour Market Information.

Business Services

June Love is presently completing a revised scope of work. Focus is on how best to gather and use Labour Market Intelligence.

North Coast 500

ES – Again, following discussions this scope is being revised. Members commented on the focus apparently being on accommodation provision when other potentially competing infrastructure needs are being highlighted (eg roads, parking, attractions). ES reminded members that the programme sought to identify opportunities to derive employment and economic benefit, but agreed that enabling infrastructure was important. A working group of agencies was currently looking at these issues, and ES agreed to look at whether a more local working group could help agree priorities. **ACTION 3 – ES** to discuss this idea with HIE Project Owner.

Oil and Gas

We have a scope from SHT outlining its infrastructure plans, and are expecting a complementary scope from HIE.

SM expressed some frustration at the length of time it had taken to agree scopes for this opportunity, and highlighted that SHT continued to pursue the redevelopment of its St. Ola Pier as a priority. He felt the programme had lost some impetus, despite the pressing need to find replacement economic activity for the declining Dounreay decommissioning programme.

ES – as agreed last year a CNSRP funding sub-group has been set up to assess the likely scale of resources (financial and human) required to deliver opportunities on the CNSRP programme. This group will continue to focus on those opportunities likely to

bring the scale and value of employment required to maintain economic levels currently brought by decommissioning work.

ACTION 4 – ES – work with HIE to agree scope for O&G opportunity.

ES – B876 Killimster Moss improvement scheme was completed in Sept 2017, and has now been taken off the programme. This has made a big improvement to the flow of traffic on an important business route.

WW agreed, but asked why so many other repairs to roads were not being sealed properly, causing rapid deterioration? JSB agreed to speak to senior colleague William Gilfillan on this issue.

A9 Berriedale Braes - ES had not received an update from Transport Scotland before producing his latest report, but expected to hear further progress on the tendering of the proposed improvement scheme within the coming month.

RS mentioned the campaign for North-of-Inverness Trunk Road improvements. He suggested this seemed to be overlooking the likes of landslips that end up blocking the roads. We really need to know what the next steps are. We need incremental improvements. **Action 5** – approach Transport Scotland for forward plans, via Caithness Transport Forum.

4. MEMBER UPDATES

CVS North – Strathnaver Museum - have gone to LEADER for money. With the possibility of going to the Lottery Fund.

Wildland is the company seeking to develop significant tourism assets in north Sutherland. It has multi-million pound plans for buildings like Hope Lodge, which should be complete in the next 15 months.

HIAL - There has been an Air traffic management review, and partners have joined the call for Wick to be considered as a central control centre. We are 8000 passengers down on last year.

NHS HIGHLAND – There is general agreement that proposed redesign plans for Caithness have not been working. A new date to bring stakeholders together should be in March. NHS Highland remit is the same on recruitment. Ability to recruit/ retain staff is having an adverse effect on the area. We need to look at changing the delivery. All stakeholders have a duty to come together.

Scrabster Harbour – New Ice Plant opened in August/September. There's been an increase in Vessel activity. O&G traffic is up 70%. Ferry is up 8%. Fishing is down but volumes are up. Chinese motivate demand. There is hope for the future. And we'd like to see an increase in activity. For this financial year we were ahead of target. We're looking towards the development of St. Ola Pier. Progression is assisted by HIE and NDA funding. Upcoming – there will be a stand at Subsea expo. Inevitably it's about promoting Caithness.

Wick Harbour Authority - Financially in a stable position. We are looking at a positive future. There's been an increase in vessels, 5 local boats using the harbour, with shellfish being exported to China. This is providing more security. High Water Protection Gate is progressing with NDA and HIE, and things should be in place by next year. We are currently advertising for the Deputy Harbour Master and there's Apprentice post opportunities.

Subsea 7 have secured further contract work and are seeing an increase in staff – back up to 120-150 people.

ES – I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Willie on being awarded an MBE. Congratulations were offered by the members.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group – wrote in support of Wick being an excellent site for an Air Traffic Control centre for Highlands and Islands, as part of recent review. Caithness Transport Forum and Wick JOG Airport Consultative Committee have also been involved. The Stakeholder Group will be meeting soon, and we'll be discussing future plans. The Chair asked if contact with Jamie Stone MP might help?

Highland Council – JSB updated that Business Gateway continues, with Jennifer Irvine and David Knight providing a good service in the area. The new Council offices in Wick are now doing well with no added expense. Council is currently discussing budgets, with decision being made mid-February. There is the need to reduce the Capital budget by 50%.

5. AOB

RS – Is concerned that there are no council representatives in attendance.

ES – Cllr Currie gave her apologies for today's meeting, but this is the 3rd meeting with no other apologies received in advance. The Chair offered to take this issue back to colleagues in the Council administration. **ACTION 5 – Chair** to discuss Local Member representation.

DM – DSG have had similar problems.

ES- reminded members that the meeting in June is the annual joint Executive Board and Advisory Board meeting.

The Chairman thanked members for attending and contributing to an engaging discussion.

	Action:	Lead:	Due Date:	Status:
1	Update members on skills action plan	SS	23/03/18	
2	Arrange update presentation to Sutherland Area Committee	JSB	23/03/18	
3	Discuss local NC500 group discussion idea with HIE project owner	ES	23/03/18	
4	Work with HIE to agree scope for O&G opportunity	ES	23/03/18	
5	Approach Transport Scotland for forward plans, via Caithness Transport Forum	ES	08/03/18	
6	Discuss Local Member representation	Chair	23/03/18	