

Programme Update

Sep-Nov 2012

This update incorporates reports from a range of partners involved in delivering elements of the *Caithness & north Sutherland Action Plan*. It is hoped that by condensing multiple reports into one paper the information will be disseminated more efficiently amongst the various groups such as the CNSRP Advisory Board, Executive Board and the Dounreay Stakeholders' Group.

Key Issues and highlights:

- The Dounreay Socio-economic Development Plan 2012-15 has been published.
- So far in 2012/13 fifteen local companies have projected the creation or retention of 60 jobs (22 in the energy sector).
- AON Hewitt is to buy the Pensions Administration Office from Babcock. All 33 existing staff will transfer to the new company.

Caithness & North Sutherland Action Plan 2011-14

The key priorities identified for 2011-14 are to:

- Work with existing area businesses in the energy and business services sectors to help them diversify and grow their businesses.
- Encourage new business starts in the energy and business services sectors
- Deliver a targeted programme of inward investment activity focused on energy and business services-related opportunities.
- Support the delivery of key enabling infrastructure such as ports and harbours, road, rail and air transport, skills transition and digital connectivity.

Key to "traffic light" reporting system:

Each text entry will have a colour-coded box. This will indicate the status of the project's delivery, and will indicate the responsible owner for the activity. The box will be colour-coded as follows:

	Activity is on schedule to be delivered.
	Activity has been delayed, or is taking longer to complete than originally expected.
	Activity has not happened, or is in danger of not happening.

Progress with High-priority activities

Energy and Business Services - existing company growth

Support growth aspirations for companies in energy sector	HIE
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HIE is currently working with 5 energy sector and 3 business services sector companies on an “account-managed” basis.

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
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One new business support in the energy sector, and Business Gateway continues to report interest in start-ups.

Energy and Business Services - inward investment	HIE/SDI
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Several leads being pursued in the energy and business services sectors. Babcock Group has sold its Pensions Administration Office (PAO) to AON Hewitt, with all 33 staff currently based at Forss transferring to the new company. AON Hewitt has said it sees opportunities for growth in the business.

Biomass	Newpark
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Caithness Biomass project continues to work on funding arrangements.

Biomass	Ignis Energy
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Ignis Energy have taken over ownership of the combined heat and power scheme in Wick, with an investment plan currently being implemented.

Fusion	HIE
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No new progress to report.

Enabling Activities

Scrabster Harbour	SHT
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Scrabster Harbour Phase 1 development now being completed.

Wick Harbour development	WHA
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WHA continues to have positive discussions with developers regarding Wick’s potential role in offshore wind in the Moray Firth. Both Moray Offshore Renewables and Beatrice Offshore Windfarm have now submitted plans to Scottish Government, with decisions expected during 2013.

Invest Caithness	CCoC
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Represented at the Scottish Renewables Marine Exhibition and the Offshore Europe Exhibition. Attending Nuclear Decommissioning Supply-chain event in Bolton.

Supply Chain Diversification	CCoC
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Enterprise Area/ Marine Energy Park	HIE
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Enterprise Area designation for Scrabster farm site became active on 1st April. Marine Energy Park launched in Thurso in July by UK Energy Minister Greg Barker MP.

Marine Energy “Onshore Vision” action plan	THC
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Business & Industrial Land Audit is now complete, and a “call for sites” has been carried out. Council officials have begun working with Scrabster Harbour Trust and Wick Harbour Authority to develop Masterplans for each area.

Superfast broadband to key parts of C&NS	HIE
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Procurement of programme should be concluded by December. Scottish Government has announced £120 million funding for the programme. Digital engagement programme for businesses and communities launched in October through HIE and Business Gateway.

Electricity Grid enhancements	SSE
Progress continues on route plans and overhead works between Dounreay and Mybster.	

Skills Development

Engineering Technology & Energy Centre	NHC-UHI
Dounreay apprentice training team have now relocated into the ETEC building, and first intake of students has begun training. ETEC officially opened by First Minister Alex Salmond MSP in August.	

Centre for Energy & the Environment	NHC-UHI
CfEE officially opened by First Minister Alex Salmond MSP in August. Major conference on the Peatlands of Caithness & Sutherland took place in Thurso in October.	

Make The Right Connections	CCoC
Good progress being made, with 294 beneficiaries having accessed the programme. 39% of these are DSRL staff, 61% are from supply chain.	

Schools STEM Programme	THC
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Innovation Challenge	CCoC
Competition winner Rachel Skene was announced by John Swinney MSP at Caithness Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner in September.	

Young Chamber programme	CCoC
No news to report.	

Transport - Roads

A9 Road safety study – Berriedale	THC/TS
Transport Scotland has confirmed that it will tender the Detailed Design study following exchange of contracts with NDA.	

Caithness Chamber is seeking funding to take on the activities of the Caithness Transport Forum and Bus Users' Group.

Caithness "internal" transport infrastructure study	THC/HITRANS
Study now complete and recommendations being considered by Council TECS team.	

Transport - Rail

Caithness freight railhead	DSRL/DRS
Construction work at Georgemas is complete. Access issues for commercial traffic being addressed by NDA/ DRS and Transport Scotland.	

Transport - air

Support Enhanced infrastructure in & around Wick Airport	HIAL
Re-branding of the airport as "Wick-John O'Groats" now in place. EuropeCar facility now launched.	

Progress with other priority activities
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Tourism - existing company growth
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Support growth aspirations for companies in Tourism sector	HIE
HIE is currently working with 5 companies on an "account-managed" basis.	

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
One new business start-up in tourism sector.	

F&D - existing company growth	
Support growth aspirations for companies in F&D sector	HIE
HIE is currently working with 2 companies on an "account-managed" basis.	

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
No new business start-ups in the food & drink sector.	

Other Sectors - existing company growth	
Support account-managed company growth	

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
Nine new business start-ups in "local market" sector to date in 2012/13.	

Other sectors - Enabling activities	
John O Groats development	
Progress continues to be good with the Natural Retreats development. The "Natural Explorer" RIB boat is offering marine wildlife tours, the "Journey's End" café and the Storehouse have opened.	

National Nuclear Archive	
NDA Board has confirmed its commitment to building a National Nuclear Archive in Wick. A business case is being submitted to UK Government.	

Town Centre development programme	
With the programme coming to an end in December both staff have now left. Activity continues, with retail training planned.	