



Programme Manager Update

Sep-Dec 2013

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:

- 129.25 FTE jobs have been projected since the start of the 2013/14 financial year.
- Meygen Ltd has been granted approval by Scottish Government to develop Europe's largest tidal stream site at the Inner Sound of the Pentland Firth. The company has also been purchased by Atlantis Resources Corporation.
- Representatives from the area visited Lowestoft at the invitation of SSE, and with support from HIE, to see a working Offshore Wind operations & maintenance base.
- CNSRP inward investment events took place in Aberdeen in December, with an Edinburgh event taking place in February.
- Caithness Chamber will run digital engagement events in January and February on behalf of HIE.

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

HIE

HMRC remote/ home working pilot is now agreed, and IT equipment/ connections should be in place to allow staff to start working from home by early January 2014.

Support non-account managed company growth

NHRF/BG

Business Gateway reports continued strong interest and enquiries from both business start-up and existing businesses.

Energy and Business Services - inward investment

HIE/SDI

Discussions continue on potential investment plans with a renewables company and two oil & gas companies – both seeking to establish a facility in Caithness. These discussions are progressing well, with a detailed proposition now prepared for one oil & gas company.

Following discussion at CNSRP Executive Board CNSRP event was staged in Aberdeen (10th Dec) with further event planned for Edinburgh (Holyrood, Feb 14) to highlight inward investment opportunities in the area. This builds on experience from the SCDI/ CNSRP event held in London in May 2013. CNSRP also sponsored an SCDI event featuring Energy Minister Fergus Ewing in Aberdeen on 2nd December.

Wick Biomass project

Ignis Energy

Ignis Energy project continues to progress. The company has been awarded £400,000 from

the Scottish Government's District Heating Loan Fund to support further expansion of its network in Wick. The award to Ignis is the largest in this funding round. The Wick scheme already connects 196 domestic customers, Pulteney Distillery, a care home and the Assembly Rooms. The extension will connect a further 200 households and Mackay's Hotel.

Enabling Activities

Scrabster Harbour	SHT
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Scrabster Harbour Trust (SHT) expected to submit a detailed planning application for its Business & Industrial Park to Highland Council– a CNSRP priority project. Support currently being discussed for further phases.

Wick Harbour development	WHA
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Wick Harbour Authority ran a planning day in November

Engineering Technology & Energy Centre	NHC-UHI
As ETEC's Engineering apprentices enter work placements during year two of their course, a video highlighting their experiences to date has been produced. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3vgSxfzJFQ	
Centre for Energy & the Environment	NHC-UHI
ERI and CfEE staff are pursuing a number of European collaboration projects. Jeremy Evans is the ERI's new Research and Enterprise Manager.	
Make The Right Connections	CCoC
Good progress being made with the Programme. Development work being undertaken with HIE, Highland Council, SDS, Job Centre Plus and N Highland College to scope possible "skills academy" approach to future skills needs. Planning is also underway for the next "Jobs and How to Get Them" event, which will take place in the Pulteney Centre, Wick on Saturday 8 th February 2014.	
Schools Programme	THC
Highland Council and SDS are developing Bridges to Employment programme in local High Schools, based on successful model developed in association with Lifescan Scotland.	
Innovation Challenge	CCoC
Award winner's business idea "You Love Local" now live for market surveys at http://www.youlovelocal.com	
Young Chamber programme	CCoC
Discussions on how best to engage with young people on entrepreneurship continue. Staff from Caithness Chamber and DSRL have worked with teams from local High Schools on Young Enterprise competition ideas.	
Transport – Roads	
A9 Road safety study – Berriedale	THC/TS
Transport Scotland has appointed a designer for the Berriedale scheme, and work now taking place re: ground surveys. Discussions also taking place with Highland Council re: business case for work to B876 road across Killimster Moss. Council options study due for completion early January. Caithness Chamber is seeking funding to continue its successful management 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. Elements of this incorporated into Charrette planning and North Highland Onshore Vision.	
Transport – Rail	
Caithness freight railhead	DSRL/DRS
DRS Ltd continues to work on potential commercial traffic opportunities and related line issues.	
Transport – air	
Support Enhanced infrastructure in & around Wick JOG Airport	HIAL
Impact of oil & gas traffic to Chevron North Sea sites has boosted flight and passenger numbers, with discussions continuing on future helicopter opportunities following the end of the contract. Wider discussions also taking place on further opportunities to position Wick JOG as a strategic airport for energy traffic. HIAL and CNSRP partners are working on detailed project plans.	
Progress with other priority activities	
Tourism - existing company growth	
Support growth aspirations for companies in Tourism sector	HIE

Natural Retreats self-catering lodges development at John O'Groats has received encouraging visitor business. The self-catering complex around the former hotel building (called "The Inn at John O'Groats") was officially opened in mid-September 2013.

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
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A group of companies that came together under the HIE-funded contract with the Centre for Design Innovation have now begun working as "Venture North" and are considering a number of activities to enhance the tourism offering in the area.

Cups Tearoom in Scrabster and both Lark & Lily Designs and Mackay's Hotel, Wick were nominated for Highlands & Islands Tourism Awards 2013.

F&D - existing company growth	
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Support growth aspirations for companies in F&D sector	HIE
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Scrabster Seafoods Ltd is projecting new employment as it continues to grow.

Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
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Caithness Smokehouse awarded Gold Stars for several of its products by the Guild of Fine Food's Great Taste awards. Berry Good and Cups were shortlisted for Highlands & Islands Food & Drink Awards, with Berry Good winning its category. Dunnet Bay Distillery is seeking approval to develop premises at Dunnet. Wolfburn Distillery in Thurso has exceeded its production targets during its first year of operation, with its first whisky due to go to market in 2016.

Other Sectors - existing company growth	
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Support account-managed company growth	
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Support non-account managed company growth	NHRF/BG
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Other sectors - Enabling activities	
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National Nuclear Archive	
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NDA confirmed in December its commitment to building the National Nuclear Archive in Wick. The project, which will also ensure a long term home for the Highland Council's North Highland Archive, will be operated for the NDA by a specialist partner. NDA planned to appoint a suitable commercial partner by late 2013, and to have the facility operational by 2016.

Town Centre development programme	
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The programme came to an end in December 2012, although activity continues, with the two town websites (Thurso – Energy Town and Wick – Heritage Town) still live. A group of Thurso businesses in particular are considering future activities. Thurso pop-up shop is drawing interest from other areas as a means of utilising town centre space. MRC's cocktail bar in Thurso has successfully used "crowd-funding" to support its start-up and growth plans. Initial discussions with the developer of Mi-Scotland app re its relevance to Thurso/ Wick/ wider area.