DSG (2003) PO13.

### **Focus North Programme Manager Update**

NORTH

DRIVING OPPORTUNITIES THAT SHAPE OUR FUTURE

### 17th of April 2023

### General

During 2022 the Caithness and North Sutherland regeneration partnership underwent a major review. This remit of this review was to: -

- Recognise the significant changes in economic position in the region since the inception of the partnership.
- Seek to understand and reflect stakeholder opinions and update the remit to better reflect renewed regional opportunities and ambition.
- Re-engage and reinvigorate the partners' approach to the partnership
- Clarify partnership roles and responsibilities, reviewing the structure and operation of the partnership.
- Develop a revised programme approach.
- Identify resources needed.

This review was undertaken under the guidance of the new Independent Chair of the Executive Board with support from an external consultancy. The process consisted of a series of workshops, attended by key personnel from all the partnership organisations supported by extensive stakeholder engagement. During this process, amongst other important stakeholders, local elected representatives were consulted, and the final renewed approach was formally endorsed by both the Caithness and Sutherland Area committees of the Highland Council.

This process resulted in the adoption of a new identity for the partnership – **Focus North** as well as changing the remit and approach. This new identity is memorable, states partner's intentions and asks others to focus on the opportunities in the North of mainland Scotland. It compliments existing initiatives such as Venture North and is descriptive but not prescriptive about the geographic boundary – the latter being something that came across strongly from local stakeholders.

Since the last DSG Socioeconomic Subgroup the review process has been concluded with a formal Focus North launch event held on the 8th of February 2023 the Weigh Inn hotel in Thurso, attended by 154 delegates. Since that point detailed Key Performance Indicators setting has commenced.

Whilst the main goal areas have been agreed - set around economic growth, people and communities partnership effectiveness and sustainability, specific key performance indicators are being developed as the initial active initiatives are being defined.

### Agreed organisational approach and responsibilities.

- A new partnership charter was agreed¹ which outlines how partners will work together.
- One of the key goals within the strategic operational policy developed is to focus on the performance of the partnership in achieving its stated aims.
- The partnership has been expanded to include the university of the Highlands and Islands (represented on the Focus North Executive Board by the principal of UHI North Highland)
- Chairmanship of the Focus North Advisory Board has been handed to the elected leader of Highland Council

### Agreed strategy and goals

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Focus North Partnership Charter - Appendix 1

- Partners agreed: a clearly defined purpose, agreed values, three-year vision and goals and initial strategic objectives<sup>2</sup>.
- Building on stakeholder feedback and the agreed goals, a Masterplan has been developed<sup>3</sup>
- An action programme has been developed, and the initiatives identified are setting the revised resourcing needs identified in this document.

### Focus North Active Initiatives - Programme implementation.

Prior to this comprehensive review the partnership had been focussed on identifying and developing project opportunities and seeking to develop these. For many years the barrier to increasing employment in the region was the lack of substantial project opportunities and most of the partnership effort was in seeking to develop and attract more. Infrastructure and support activities were perceived as a secondary priority and only when these were seen to be a barrier to a specific project were activities to overcome them instigated. The significant opportunities developing in the region reinforced by stakeholder consultation and surveys undertaken as part of the Focus North launch demonstrate that this balance has changed. The barrier to growing employment and diversifying the economy in the short and medium term is now less about project opportunities and more about other factors. The lack of skilled personnel, in particular, needs to be addressed. To maximise local benefits from the opportunities attracting, training, and retaining the talent is vital. To facilitate the growth of the workforce, infrastructure, transport, and accommodation issues become increasingly important to overcome. The new approach therefore places much more emphasis upon overcoming these restraining factors, whilst continuing to pursue new Inward investment and large projects. Without both strands being equally targeted economic diversification and growth in employment is likely to be constrained by lack of personnel or other issues.

Summarising the stakeholder engagement including discussions with local employers identifies three recurring themes in order of priority: -

- 1. Lack of skilled personnel (with housing of personnel being a significant repeating issue)
- 2. Lack of or poor broadband connectivity
- 3. Transport for employees

The priority order of items two and three vary from employer to employer depending on the nature of the business and location.

Item 1 - Work has been initiated to look at skills and talent attraction issues with the support of Jacobs, led by Caithness Chamber of Commerce. An initial workshop to scope the approach was held on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb, with several individual consultations factfinding and research to establish baseline needs and issues held with multiple stakeholders since. The output from this exercise will be a detailed work plan agreed between the partners involved, anticipated to be completed during May.

Item 2 - The surveys undertaken for the Focus North launch event continue to highlight the significant concerns from businesses and individuals around digital connectivity. Of the attendees who completed the survey, 75 % believed this to be either a high or very high risk to the region's development. This is reinforced by discussions with many local stakeholders and businesses. A proposal to develop an approach to enhance the local digital economy is being developed. An initial information gathering phase will inform the formation of a short-duration action group to create and implement an action plan.

Item 3 – Transport requirements in the region are evolving. The need to decarbonise transport means moving to low carbon transport methods - electric vehicles, and potentially hydrogen

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Focus North Strategic Operational Policy - Appendix 2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Focus North Masterplan <a href="https://www.focusnorth.scot/wp-content/uploads//Focus-North-Masterplan-19-Apr-23-v9.pdf">https://www.focusnorth.scot/wp-content/uploads//Focus-North-Masterplan-19-Apr-23-v9.pdf</a>

powered trains, aircraft, and heavy goods vehicles including buses. At the same time travel patterns have changed - Dounreay's requirement to transport its workforce, college student movements, and more people working from home have all changed since COVID-19. Future public transport arrangements need to take into account this evolving picture.

Transport is a complex issue and multiple strands of activity are underway amongst partners that are being coordinated through Focus North. A demand study and an approach to develop alternative innovative approaches is being led by the Chamber of Commerce, liaising with Highland council's net zero and transport teams, whilst at the same time exploring how this can be supported through the Scottish Government's place-based pilot scheme. Highland council have also commenced consultations updating its Local Transport Strategy, which sets out how it will manage and modernise the transport network across the region in the coming years. The Case for Change is the first stage in this process and is about gathering evidence and this consultation seeks views on it. The full Case for Change Report and questionnaire are available at: -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2233/local\_transport\_strategy\_case\_for\_ch\_ange

### **Focus North Regional Projects Updates**

Continuing to engage with West of Orkney Offshore windfarm and Pentland Floating Offshore Wind Farm. West of Orkney has already led a £900,000 investment to support a STEM initiative at University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to promote careers in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). The expansion of this provision includes funding for two full-time STEM coordinators located in Caithness & Sutherland and Orkney.

The initiative is the first co-funded project to be announced following the launch of the Scottish Offshore Wind Energy Council's collaborative framework charter in May, where ScotWind developers committed to working together for the benefit of Scotland as a whole. It is also the first project to be supported under UHI's new sustainability fund, which is being established to help accelerate the region's transition to a green and sustainable economy.

Spaceport Sutherland continues to develop with expectation of first launch during 2024.

### **Focus North Organisational update**

To progress these priority actions, it has been agreed that a business development manager will join the Focus North support team. After an open recruitment process Focus North Business Development Manager has been recruited and will start in May.

Peter Faccenda

Focus North Programme Manager 18 Apr 2023

### FOCUS NORTH

## Focus North Partnership Charter (v1 Agreed 6 Sept 22)

DRIVING OPPORTUNITIES THAT SHAPE OUR FUTURE

### Our Intent

# To deliver sustainable economic opportunities in the North of Mainland Scotland.

- · We recognise this region as an important and globally distinctive centre of opportunity.
- · We will develop an ambitious masterplan, aligned to Partner goals, and suitably resource its delivery.
- We will measure success based on agreed economic measures and community benefits.

### Collaborate and Trust

# To be a dynamic Partnership, committed to a common vision and shared goals.

- . We will adapt our Partnership in response to need and opportunity and do so with agility and efficiency.
- · We commit to taking responsibility and accountability for our actions.
- We value individual contributions towards collective strength.
- We will be honest and transparent with each other.

### Act as One team

### To build trust and respect in all we do.

- · Honouring our commitments to each other and our communities.
- Actively listening and understanding our differences.
- Aligning our priorities and playing to our strengths.
- Deploying the right delivery resource to achieve success.

FOCUS NORTH Focus North S  PRIVAT SHAPE CURE TO SEPT 22)	Strategic Operational Policy: 2023 – 2026 (v1 Agreed 6	: 2023 – 2026 (v1 Agreed 6
	3-Yr Vision	Strategic Objectives
Driving the opportunities that shape Our future.	Our Partnership <i>makes the</i> difference by growing the economic prosperity of Our communities.	#1: Masterplan Publish an agreed plan which is current, has measurable goals and time scales with identified owners.
Our Core Values	3-Yr Goals	#2: People
<ul> <li>Ambitious for Our future: Being creative and determined in exploiting the art of the possible in every opportunity.</li> <li>Being One team: Continuously building trust whilst respecting our differences, within and outside the Partnership.</li> <li>Planning as One Team: Being open and honest in envisioning our future by setting ambitious strategic objectives and goals, appropriately resourced to succeed</li> <li>Being proud to deliver: Do what we say we will do and hold each other to account; don't dither - Deliver.</li> <li>Communicating as One: Shared consistent narrative, demonstrating a commitment to the importance and value of the Partnership.</li> </ul>	<ol> <li>Economic Growth</li> <li>People/Communities</li> <li>Partnership Effectiveness</li> <li>Sustainability</li> </ol>	#3: Funding Attract partner, public and private sector investment to deliver the masterplan. #4: Impact Deliver the masterplan, measure progress, and demonstrate results. #5: Profile Promote the region and the Partnership's objectives, activities, and impact.

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	Programme Lead		Peter Faccenda	16 April 2023	Draft 1		DR TH,	DRIVING OFFICETURITIES THAT SHAPE OUR FUTURE	STRE	THINGS STATES TO THE TENT OF THE PROPERTY OF T
Focus N	Focus North Regional Programme									
Focus N	Focus North Active Initiatives	9	Goal alignment: Economic Growth(EG); Peop	Growth(EG); People/L	ole/Communities(PC); Sustainability(S); Partnership(PP)	Sustainability(5	; Partnership(	(dd		
Тһете	TABK	Status	Task Lead	Task support	Goal	KPI STA	START EN	END %	RAG	
Economic	The state of the state of		HIE AM							
Initiative	Space apportunities		HEAM							
1111	Space cluster development	Ongoing	HIE Area Mgr	Focus North PM	53	1.1.4 02/0	02/04/23 02/0	02/07/23 80%		
	Development of incubation space at Forss	Ongoing	HIE Area Mgr		36		п			
	Resourcing for cluster deviopment	Ongoing	Focus North PM		4479	0/01	П			
Initiative	Strengthening the Digital economy		Focus North PM							
	Factfind to identify gaps and opportunities for devicement initiatives		Focus North PM		tid.pc	2/01	30/03	30/03/23 50%		
	Establish a working group		Focus North PM			24/0	24/03/23 31/0	31/03/23 0%		
Initiative	Offshore Wind Opportunities		HIE AM	1 1 1 1 1 1 1	-					
	Discussions with developers	Ongoing	HIE Area Mar	Focus North PM	86	1.1.4 02/0	02/04/23 31/1:	31/12/26 110%		
Initiative	Peatlands Restoration opportunities	Ongoing	Focus North PM	1						
	Green Finance Initiative	Ongoing	AM NatureScot	Focus North PM	EG/PC/S 1	1,1;3.1 01/0	1/15 91/10	31/12/23 60%		
Initiative	Green skills and research	Ongoing	Focus North PM							
	Battery skills bid	Ongoing	NHCEAD		7	27/0	27/03/23 30/0	6/23 150%		
	Green research and fonovation hub		NHCEAD		NC.	0/10		30/12/24   10%		
investigaton	Green job creation	Ongoing	Focus Morth PM							
	Identifying definition of green jobs	Origoing	HIE AM	THE NAME OF	50,5	14/0	14/03/23 14/0	14/04/23 80%		
People &			CCoC Chief Exec							
Initiative	Talent attraction and Skills Development action plan		CCoC Chief Exec							
	Jacobs review	Underway	CCoC Chief Exec	Focus North PM		21/0	21/02/23 09/0	09/05/23 80%	100	
	Project scape, definition, schedule, cost, resourcing	1			A STATE OF THE STA	0/60		I		
Sustainabilit			Doumeny SE/Sust Me.							
Initiative	Development of community benefit funding model		Dounneay SE/Sust Mgr Dounneay SE Mgr	Dounreay SE Mgr			T all	27		
	Developent of future potential models - option appraisal	- R	Highland council					-		
Partnership		1 1 1	Focus North PM	1000				No.		
performance	A - 1000		100 000 000		The state of the s	ı	ш			
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	Maleston Madagina	Simula S	Poster House and					200		
Promotion	Westminster Roadshow	Planning	Focus North PM		All I		1	5%		
Measurement	Undertake baseline awareness surveys	Discussions	Focus North PM			4.3 01/0	01/04/23 31/0	31/05/23 1 5%		
Measurement	Exec and Delivery Group maturity model review		Focus North IC		40			%6		
	Resourcing	Recruiting BC	Recruking BDM Focus North PM		25	7/60	09/02/23 31/0	31/05/23 30%	Į.	
Pipeline	Focus North projects and intiliative	es under co	nsideration	- F						
	Area Housing	Investigation	Highland council? Housing team	sing team						
	Transport for employees	Investigation	TBA				ш			
	Hydrogen projects					02/C	02/02/23 09/0	09/05/23 0%		
	Other Natural capital opportunities		ERI PM							
Completed Ini	Completed Initiat Completed initiatives	-	-						V	Activity completed and impacts
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Regional, partner and other relevant projects

FOCUS NORTH ACTION PROGRAMME	PROGRAMME			NO CO	
Start Date	07/01/2023	Updated Version		<b>&gt;</b>	2023 2024
Programma Lead	Peter Faccenda	023		Driving deportunities That shape dur euturg	THE PROPERTY OF A SECOND
Focus North Regional Programme					
heim TASK Status	Task Lead	Task support Goal	Kill START	END DONE RAG	THE COURSE OF SECTION ASSESSMENT
Space industry opportunities	HIE Area Mgr				
Space port construction		60	02/04/23	3 31/03/24	
Space port operations		66	02/04/24	- 1	
Offshore Wind Opportunities		N. Committee		П	
Pentland Offshore Windfarm		Pentland PM EG;PP	10/05/23	3 09/08/24 1/10%	
Pentiand Floating Offshore Windfarm construction and O&M	Pentland WF PM	EG;S			
West of Orkney Windfarm		W of Orkney PM EG;5	09/10/23	3 09/04/24 19%	
West of Orkney Windfarm - Construction and O&M	WafOrkney WF PM				
Scrabster Harbour development	SHT PM				
Wick Harbour development	MSTHW	100			
Regional research and innovation	UHI Dir ExtA				
Fact finding and investigation			02/04/23	3 02/07/23 \$6%	
Branding activities			18/04/23	ш	
Battery energy storage		0	02/02/24	4 09/09/24 . 50%	
Gordonbush Hydrogen production	SSE				
Peatlands World Heritage Bid	NatureScot 1		12/01/23	3 31/12/23 70%	

3 year goals Economic Growth RPIs Leading initiatives (Interventions) accining
Lagging indi
No of Green jo
Duamess survival rates Value of Exports Number of Fair Work Employers
People and Communities KPIs (Interventions) Lagging indicators
Numbers of Apprentices Training outcomes Talent Attraction Outcomes Increased School Roles
KPIs Lagging
Developent of future potential models - option appraisal
Number of businesses with community Tender writing reachback
Partnership Effectiveness KPIs Ladding indicators
Stakeholder awareness /Satisfaction survey annually Agree methodology with 3x1
Procure 3rd F
Measure Partnership progress against formal maturity model