

DOUNREAY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Minutes of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group Public Meeting, held at 19:00 on Wednesday 4 December 2024 on MS Teams.

Present: Cllr Struan Mackie (SM)	DSG Chair (The Highland Council)
David Alexander (DA)	DSG Vice-chair (Thurso and Wick Trade Union Council)
Gillian Coghill (GC)	DSG Site Restoration SG chair (Buldoo Residents Group)
Roger Saxon (RS)	DSG Site Restoration subgroup deputy chair
Peter Faccenda (PF)	Focus North
Eann Sinclair (ES)	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Niall Watson (NW)	NRS Dounreay Trade Unions
Ron Gunn (RG)	CHAT
Tor Justad (TJ)	HANP
David Craig (DC)	Caithness West Community Council
Thelma Mackenzie (ThM)	Thurso Community Council
Cllr Andrew Jarvie (AJ)	Highland Council
Cllr Michael Baird (MB)	Highland Council
Fiona Bruce (FB)	Women in Nuclear Highland
Christian Nicolson (CN)	NHS
Trudy Morris (TrM)	Chamber of Commerce
Ken Nicol (KN)	DSG co-opted member of the public
Debbie Miller (DM)	UHI North, West and Hebrides
Cllr Dr Stephen Clackson (SC)	Orkney Council

Attending: Dave Wilson (DWi)	NRS Dounreay Managing Director
Mac MacGill (MM)	NRS Dounreay Deputy Managing Director
Alan Mackay (AM)	NDA Site Facing Team
James Francis (JF)	ONR
Stewart Ballantine (SB)	SEPA
Supt Lynsay Hernandez (LH)	CNC
C/Insp Paul Kilmartin (PK)	CNC
Cdr Ian Walker (IW)	MOD Vulcan
James Bryson (JB)	DNSR
Tina Wrighton (TW)	NRS Dounreay Stakeholder & External Relations
Ferne Mill (FM)	NRS Dounreay Communications Administrator
Emma MacDonald (EM)	NRS Dounreay Communications Administrator

MINUTES

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Struan Mackie welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. APOLOGIES

The following apologies were received:

- David Broughton DSG co-opted member of the public
- Abbe Luckock WiN Highlands (Fiona Bruce deputising)
- Cllr Raymond Bremner The Highland Council
- Diane Hamilton Scottish Government
- John Deighan DSG co-opted member of the public
- Cllr Matthew Reiss The Highland Council
- Cllr Jan McEwan The Highland Council
- Ryan McLean Scrabster Harbour

3. SPACEPORT

SM apologised for a last-minute change to the agenda and invited Eann Sinclair to discuss the moving of the spaceport work to Shetland. ES explained how this announcement came as a major surprise to HIE as positive discussions had been going on recently regarding work at the spaceport. He went on to say that the Chamber of Commerce also had been having positive conversations with Orbex so were equally as taken aback by the news. As the news was only 24 hours old ES was unable to give much context or answers. He continued by saying that Orbex said this was only a pause to work in Sutherland not pulling out of Sutherland all together.

Questions were invited, Tor Justad spoke about his organisations concerns over the spaceport and explained reasons why he was not in favour for it. TJ then stated that if work does not resume on the site that all public money should be refunded and he believes it is a scandal a business can enter the Highlands and then leave again with no real explanation. ES and SM thanked TJ for speaking his concerns.

SM and ES both continued by saying they are thinking of the community at this time as it is a big loss to Sutherland. Cllr Michael Baird was invited to speak; he said at the start of the week he was told that work was ongoing on the site. MB and ES then discussed the site plan and what alternative operators are available.

TrM added that the Chamber of Commerce were blindsided by the news as only 10 days prior they put out to their members of the supply chain tenders that Orbex were issuing. She continued to say the news was deeply disappointing and frustrating and that the Chamber are concerned the site will lie unused so they will be pushing Orbex and their partners to release the site so it can be used for other purposes.

SM thanked everyone for their input and no further questions were asked.

4. NRS DOUNREAY UPDATES

The update started with an introduction to NRS Dounreay's new full time managing director Dave Wilson. DWi gave some background information about his previous career and informed the group he has been managing the site for 2.5 weeks and is currently looking to locate to the area. He said that there will be challenging times ahead, but he is looking forward to the future and can feel the community support. Struan thanked him for his update and said the group look forward to working with him.

NDA Corporate: Alan Mackay reported:

The NDA update was as per the written paper.

Alan invited David Wallace gave an update on the Cross-Party group that happened in September which was the 2nd CPG to happen in Scottish parliament, DWa thanked people for their contributions and encouraged people to get involved. The skills issue was discussed at the last meeting and as a result they are working with vice chair Emma Harper to look at motion in parliament to discuss skills issues and skills gaps that need filled for future decommissioning.

A SCORRS engagement officer starts on February 1 to hopefully get SCORRS up and running again. DWa continued by saying that there is an annual ministerial briefing with the cabinet secretary, the briefing will be organised in the early new year and it was suggested the meeting was held on a site, possibly Dounreay.

Questions were welcomed, TJ asked if cross party groups are hybrid, DWa informed TJ they are hybrid and that he will add TJ to a CPG list.

NW asked about involvement of the unions within the CPG. DWa said it is important unions put forward their views particularly with the skills issues. NW said he is interested in getting involved in, especially as Dounreay is one of the larger and more complex sites. NW continued by encouraging DWa to involve national union officers in the CPG as that allows a broader view across Scotland. No further questions were asked.

SM thanked AM and DWa for their update.

NRS Dounreay: Dave Wislon reported:

Dave Wilson updated on staffing, Neil Cook, finance director, has retired and his position is being filled by Alison Hammond, she will start formally December 6. He then said steady progress is being made and targets are recovering. 10-15% of the plan will be deferred this year due to various issues including industrial action.

DWi continued by addressing the Fuel Cycle Area steam issues he said the site had identified historic problems with welds and a good job has been done by all to respond quickly and efficiently. DWi then briefly covered the regulatory enforcement and explained the site is still on enhanced regulatory attention but that talks are openly on going with both ONR and SEPA.

DWi closed off his update with some positive news that the site's Safety and Security exercise had gone well and lots of positive feedback and learning came from it. He also said the 2025 pay offer for staff was with the unions awaiting response. Only 1 particle was found on November 25 on Forss shore which has been categorised as normal.

Questions were welcomed. Nothing was raised.

SM thanked DWi for his update.

SEPA: Stewart Ballantine reported:

SB had nothing further to add to his report. He then read an update given to him by SSEN.

As part of the planning process for the Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Orkney-Caithness high-voltage cabling project, SEPA identified the need for monitoring for radioactivity to be undertaken at the site where a sub-station will be constructed. The monitoring is needed due to the proximity of the site to the former RAF-Dounreay base. Following the identification of radium contamination at the site, SSEN has stopped work while it acquires an Environmental (Scotland) Authorisations Regulations 2018 (EASR) permit. An EASR permit is needed due to the presence of radium contamination at depth and the planned excavation works, beyond these depths. The site is secure and there is not public access to it.

He then welcomed any questions.

TJ asked for a timescale for investigating and responding the SSEN issue. SB said it is being actively looked at but there is no timescale known at the moment.

There were no further questions.

SM thanked SB for his update.

ONR: James Francis reported:

A topical inspection of climate change took place on site in September and ONR have published further work on that to their website which gives more information. Confirmation was provided to ONR by Dounreay that the issues of the leak from the Carbon bed filter had been solved and ONR were content with the action taken. A RIDDOR event was reported regarding a fractured foot and ONR visited the work area this occurred in and no shortfalls were identified in the area. A return to routine plan has been established with the site to address the regulatory enhancement issues. JF confirmed ONR were aware of the steam issue within the FCA and confirmed ONR are happy with the plans and actions being made to tackle the problem.

JF welcomed any questions. TJ made a comment that it was good to see the climate change report on the ONR website.

No further questions were raised.

SM thanked JF for his update.

CNC: Superintendent Lynsay Hernandez reported:

An update was given on the recruitment campaign. A successful uptake has been made from this campaign as there have been lots of applicants. There will also be 2 local courses running in March next year and another later in the year. There is continued support from officers within the wider in UK CNC branches to ensure local officers have a better life work balance. Police Scotland have continued to be supported by the CNC and since the last meeting there has been 1 incident where the CNC officers were requested to help Police Scotland. The new chief inspector Paul

Gilmartin was invited to introduce himself to the group and gave some background on his previous career and experience with site stakeholder groups.

Questions were welcomed. TJ asked about local recruitment and how many recruits were expected. LH explained it is difficult to forecast this and that she would love to be able to fill as many vacancies as possible with local people.

No further questions were raised.

SM thanked LH for her update.

5. MOD (VULCAN) UPDATES

MOD, Vulcan: Cdr Ian Walker reported the following:

There had been no lost time accidents since the last meeting. There has been 1 environmental event as a minor oil spill took place in the car park, this was not a reportable event to SEPA. The level 2 Lonestar exercise for next year has been discussed and they are beginning to plan scenarios, formal planning will begin in the new year. SEPA requested that all monthly discharge reports since 2017 that contained errors were resubmitted, Vulcan committed to providing SEPA the programme for this work by 31 December.

IW went on to thank Rolls Royce for their support at the Remembrance Day in Thurso, they replaced planters around the memorial as part of their community support programme.

Questions were welcomed. TJ asked for clarification on what reports Vulcan had to resubmit to SEPA. IW explained they are monthly discharge reports, earlier this year Vulcan self-identified that some of these reports contained errors therefore SEPA asked for each record that has an error to be resubmitted.

There were no further questions.

SM thanked IW for his update.

SEPA: Stewart Ballantine reported:

SB had nothing further to add and welcomed any question. No questions were raised.

SM thanked SB for his input.

ONR: James Francis reported:

There were no further updates. Questions were welcome and none were raised.

SM thanked JF for his input.

DNSR:

There was nothing further to add. No questions were asked.

SM thanked JB for his input.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr Struan Mackie noted the minutes of the last public meeting (DSG(2024)M02) held on 20 March 2024 had been circulated to members in advance. He invited members to raise any issues from the minutes. Tor Justad noted SCORRS had been spelt SCORES and this was to be changed.

There were no further changes, and the minute was accepted as a true reflection of the meeting. This was proposed by Cllr Struan Mackie and seconded by Peter Faccenda.

The minutes of the DSG socioeconomic subgroup (DSG/SESG(2024)M03) held on 17 July 2024 were ratified, proposed by David Alexander, and seconded by Gillian Coghill.

The minutes of the DSG site restoration subgroup (DSG/SRSG(2024)M02) held on 17 July 2024 were ratified, proposed by Gillian Coghill, and seconded by David Craig.

7. STATUS OF ACTIONS

DC raised an issue with the action status as he believed an action was missing regarding the targets. TW confirmed this was recorded through the business meeting but is happy to circulate the information to members. SM confirmed he is happy for the target information to go out to the wider DSG.

Other than this the status of actions were taken as an accurate reflection.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Prior to opening to DSG members, Cllr Struan Mackie noted the following.

SM stated that there have been many meetings between the DSG business group and the site, something that was raised was that since 2019 the DSG have not had a physical site visit. SM believes this would be beneficial to the group especially to have focused visit to specific areas on site, SM will keep the group updated on this.

Cllr Mackie then invited members to raise any other business.

TJ then asked about the Focus North report. TJ asked if there has been a discussion around job numbers, and what is the prediction for jobs? ES answered that 40 jobs were to be created in Tongue and Melness and 250 jobs regional wide. This also includes Orkney not just Caithness and Sutherland. Benefits realisation work has been ongoing for the last month and a half however the pausing of the spaceport work will have significant impact.

RS then asks the visit to site and was interested to know what the other members of the DSG think the visits should focus on. RS believes a broad visit trying to get everything done in 1 day would not be beneficial to the group. SM said that members will be asked what they would like to see on site.

ThM questioned whether ES heard from Orbex regarding the news via an email or a phone call, ES informed Thelma they heard by an email.

RG raised that a powerful 130-page report on human rights had been published. He informed the group it had gone to united nations to explain to them the conditions the county live with. SM requests this report is circulated with members. TJ and RS then briefly discussed opposing views and environmental issues with the spaceport.

NW then referred to the human rights report and explained that Dounreay being up here has had a massive impact on the area, he believes the area should be invested in.

9. CLOSE

Cllr Struan Mackie thanked everyone for their input and formally closed the meeting.

Cllr Struan Mackie
DSG Chair
4 December 2024

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

No formal actions were recorded