



DSGSESG(2025)P031

**DOUNREAY SOCIO ECONOMIC UPDATE***current as of 01 October 2025*

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**Highland Investment Plan**

NRS Dounreay is engaging with the Highland Council and Hub North on the Highland Investment Plan (HIP). Dounreay representatives hold membership of the Thurso Transformation Delivery Group.

In relation to the Office Points of Delivery (POD) Dounreay has undertaken early discussions, including an opportunity framing workshop, on offsite working (office) accommodation, and has seconded a project manager to develop the business case approach.

In relation to challenges around housing and accommodation in the area, and potential vacant office properties arising from the HIP and other Focus North partners plans, Dounreay has also engaged with relevant stakeholders.

In addition, Dounreay is managing Focus North funding for UHI North, and Hebrides, provided by the NDA, related to development of a business case for an innovation centre, which is aligned to aims and aspiration of the HIP. Dounreay representatives hold membership of the North Highland Innovation Centre Task Force.

**Communications and Events**

His Majesty the King visited an event at Scrabster Harbour in July marking several significant NDA group milestones, including the 70 year anniversary for Dounreay, the NDA's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and 50 years of the Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. NDA Chief Executive David Peattie, joined by NRS Chair Lawrie Haynes, and NRS Dounreay Managing Director Dave Wilson introduced The King to staff and community stakeholders at the Scrabster event.

Dounreay staff took part in Scottish Parliament's Festival of Politics at Holyrood in August. The Cross Party Group on the Civil Nuclear Industry celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a panel session chaired by Oliver Mundell MSP on the 'Atomics – the people behind Dounreay'.

Dounreay employees showcased the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the County Show and Halkirk Games in July and the Mey Games in August. The NDA and Dounreay provide support to the Halkirk and Mey Games.

Dounreay socio economic grant funding was highlighted throughout the summer period:

- [NRS celebrates socio-economic investment - GOV.UK](#)
- A range of social media posts covering the Wick River Campsite Development, the Live North website, and the Future Skills Programme.

The Dounreay Socio Economic Annual Review for 2024/2025 was due to be published in but has been delayed to Q3.

### **Economic Impact Study**

Dounreay is currently engaged through an NDA Group wide contract to develop the latest Economic Impact Study. The previous report was completed in 2022 and is updated on a three-year basis. The report is expected to be released before the FY end and will capture the economic impact of the site on the local, regional, national, and UK economies.

### **Grant Funding**

Dounreay continues to provide pre-application support for socio economic funding. Circa 70% of the FY 2025/2026 budget has already been committed on multi-year projects and we expect to fully utilise the socio economic budget this financial year – as per previous years.

The continued status of socio economic grant funding activities is recorded in Appendix 1, with new projects funded in the previous quarter outlined below:

- FR-000002858 - Association of the Northern Trails, Trail Development Manager - £35,000 (1 yr)
- FR-000002360 – Sidh Chailleann Art – Caithness Art and Stone Festival - £11,970 (<1yr)
- FR-000002821 – Thurso Youth Club, Summer Trips - £5,951 (<1yr)
- FR-000002582 – Caithness CAB, Community Outreach - £176,644 (3 yr)

NRS Dounreay was also awarded the ‘Best socio-economic initiative’ at the NDA Group Employee Awards 2025 for its innovative partnership with the Caithness Business Fund to deliver the FutureSkills programme supporting area SME Apprenticeships.

### **Procurement**

The following financial figures are for Q2 2025/2026, with the number of companies cumulative for Q1 and Q2. It should be noted that they do not sum to any total.

#### **Q2 FY25/26**

- Total Spend £27.1M including mandatory spend
- £19.3M of which is non-mandatory and non-utility
- £3.4M is with 41 companies that are Caithness owned
- £10.3M is with 19 companies with Caithness resource\*

- £13.7M is spent with Caithness owned or resourced suppliers
- £7.0M is with 257 SME suppliers (including Caithness SME)

#### **YTD FY25/26**

- Total Spend £50.3M including mandatory spend
- £38.9M of which is non-mandatory and non-utility
- £6.4M is with 44 companies that are Caithness owned
- £20.7M is with 19 companies with Caithness resource\*
- £27.1M is spent with Caithness owned or resourced suppliers
- £13.4 M is with 345 SME suppliers (including Caithness SME)

\*Includes some mandatory spend

FY = Financial Year

YTD = Year to Date

\*Includes some mandatory spend. (YTD = year to date).

The socio economics team, working with the commercial team, continue to improve how Dounreay sets, assesses, and monitors social value across in scope procurements. Dounreay continues to manage social value commitments from procurement.

#### **Staffing**

Recruitment continues to be carefully managed. Dounreay shares full details of all internal and external recruitment with the DSG Business Group to ensure transparency. Updates were provided in July, August, and September of this quarter highlighting recruitment due to new posts, internal backfill, and leavers.

The latest cohort of health physics surveyor trainees was advertised during this quarter.

Dounreay welcomed the 2025 cohort of apprentices and graduates, with NDA Energus graduates due to start in early October. The current total is 50 apprentices, 6 NDA/Energus Graduates and 25 Dounreay Direct Graduates.



2025 intake of Dounreay graduates.

## **STEM**

Seven teams from Caithness & North Sutherland have registered, sponsored by NRS Dounreay for the First Lego League Challenge 2025/26. The teams work throughout the academic year in preparation for competing in the North Highland Tournament on 11 March 2026.

NRS Dounreay's Business Apprentices attended the Highland Live Happy event at Thurso High School on 25 September to inform pupils of the range of work opportunities available locally.

Preparations are commencing for the Goblin Car Project 2025/26 with early indications that more schools wish to participate this academic year. This project is run by NRS Dounreay Engineers supported by apprentices from NRS Dounreay and Rolls Royce.

## **Dounreay Heritage**

Provided in Appendix 2

## **Visits to Dounreay**

- Jamie Stone MP Site Visit -11<sup>th</sup> July
- Lee McDonough, Director General DESNZ – 29<sup>th</sup> July

- David Peattie, CEO NDA – 29<sup>th</sup> July
- Clive Nixon, Chief Nuclear Strategy Officer, NDA - 29<sup>th</sup> July
- Lawrie Haynes, Chair NRS Board – 29<sup>th</sup> July
- John Vickerman, Chief People Officer, NRS – 29<sup>th</sup> July

**Magnus Davidson,**  
**NRS Dounreay Socio Economics Manager**

**David Calder,**  
**NRS Dounreay Head of Sustainability and Socio Economics**

**01/10/2025**

### **Appendix 1**

Rolling status of socio economic grant funding activities

<b>Funded Project</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
CNSRP (Focus North) support hub	30/03/2024		Funding commitment: 3 years Total award: £487,000 Yr 4 (25/26): £103k* carry over  £34,394 paid to date
Caithness Transport Forum	31/03/2027		Funding commitment: 3 years Total award: £30K Yr 2 (25/26): £10K  £10K paid to date.
Focus North Programme Manager	31/03/2027		Funding commitment: 3 years Total award: Up to £124,830k Yr 2 (25/26): Up to £40k  £19,933 paid to date
STEM activities	N/A		Funding commitment: ongoing Total annual award £25k  Awaiting Q2 figures
Dounreay Community Fund	N/A		Funding commitment: ongoing Total annual award £35k  £35k paid for 2025/26
Ormlie Community Association	30/09/2026		Funding commitment: 3 years Total award: £60k Yr 3: £20k  £0 paid to date
	31/12/2026		Funding commitment: 3 year Total award: £ 149,630

Funded Project	Completion date	Progress	Comments
Dunbeath and District Centre			Yr 3: £24,938 £0 paid to date
Rumster Outdoor Centre	31/07/2025		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £43,000 Yr 1: £43,000 £43,000 paid to date
Science Skills Academy Newton Room Thurso	01/06/2028		Funding commitment: 3 year Total award: £128,000 Yr 1: £40,000 £0 paid to date
North Coast Visitor Centre (Highlife Highland)	31/10/2027		Funding commitment: 3 year Total award £265,000 Yr 1: £75,000 £37.5k paid to date
Community Plan and Delivery (Thurso Community Development Trust)	30/09/2027		Funding commitment: 3 yr Total award: £200,000 Yr 1: £66,666 £16,666 paid to date
Masterplan Delivery Officer (UpNorth! CDT)	01/03/2027		Funding commitment: 2 yr Total award: £36,551 Yr 2: £18,177 £0
Destination Strategy and Venture North (CCoC)	31/03/2028		Funding commitment: 3 yr Total award: £342,000 Yr 1: £147,667 £88,222 paid to date
Caithness Sports Council Reboot (CSC)	31/03/2026		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £10,000 £10k paid to date
Farm Cluster and Baseline Pilot (NHI)	31/03/2026		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £72,186 £72,186 paid to date
Community Infrastructure Support Programme (NHI)	31/03/2026		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £100,000 £100k paid to date
Apprenticeship Programme (CBF)	31/03/2027		Funding commitment: 2 years Total award: £150,000 Yr 1: £150,000 £150k paid to date
Future Skills Graduate Scheme	31/03/2027		Funding commitment: 2 years Total award: £100,000 Yr 1: £100,000 £100k paid to date



Funded Project	Completion date	Progress	Comments
Association of the Northern Trails, Trail Development Manager	01/07/2027		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £35,000 Yr 1: £35,000  £35,000 paid to date
Sidh Chailleann Art – Caithness Art and Stone Festival	30/06/2026		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £11,970 Yr 1: £11,970  £11,970 paid to date
Thurso Youth Club, Summer Trips	30/09/2025		Funding commitment: <1 year Total award: £5,951  £5,951 paid to date
Caithness CAB, Community Outreach	01/10/2028		Funding commitment: 3 years Total award: £176,644 Yr 1: £58,147  £29,073.50 paid to date

## **Appendix 2**

### **Dounreay Heritage Initiative**

#### **Progress report – July to September 2025**

#### **Collection of objects**

A total of 506 objects have been collected since 2008. No objects were collected in the period.

#### **Recording of memories**

A process to capture the memories of those leaving the site is in place. A form with seven questions is sent to leavers, and it is voluntary to complete it. No forms were returned in the period.

A senior manager with 40 years' experience has written several detailed technical reports covering the significant decommissioning projects that he managed. They include lessons learned and should prove very useful to future projects involving uranium and plutonium contamination. They are waiting approval.

James Gunn has written six history reports on various topics. They are site history, communications and public relations, commercial ventures, particles in the environment, leukaemia cluster and the shaft. They are waiting approval.

All of the oral history recordings and transcripts captured during research for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary book, The Atomics, are available at Nucleus for use by researchers and historians.

## **Research projects**

The three-year NuSPACES research project about nuclear cultural heritage was completed in September 2024. It was undertaken by a collaboration of academics from the UK, Sweden and Lithuania. James Gunn was one of the project's board members.

The project will publish an international book about nuclear cultural heritage in late 2025 and one of the case studies will be about the Dounreay and Sellafield heritage initiatives.

## **Dounreay history**

Dounreay's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary is celebrated throughout 2025 and to mark this milestone a book has been written by James Gunn and Thurso journalist Iain Grant. The title is, "The Atomics: the story of Dounreay's people" – see image below. King Charles attended an event at Scrabster to celebrate the anniversary, and he was given the first copy by David Peattie, NDA CEO. It was officially launched on 2 August 2025 at the Mey Highland Games.

Four book signing sessions were held in August to promote it. Over 500 copies were sold in August. It is available to buy at various local outlets and on-line from the Whittles Publishing website. The price is £17.99 for the paperback. All profits go to the Dounreay Employees Charity Fund.

## **Dounreay Reminiscence Group**

The popular Dounreay Reminiscence Group (DRG) is due to resume on 2<sup>nd</sup> October at Nucleus in Wick (1 to 3pm). There will be monthly sessions until March 2026. A visit to Dounreay is planned for 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

A report on the benefits of the DRG has been sent to the NDA to aid any decision on expanding the initiative to other sites.

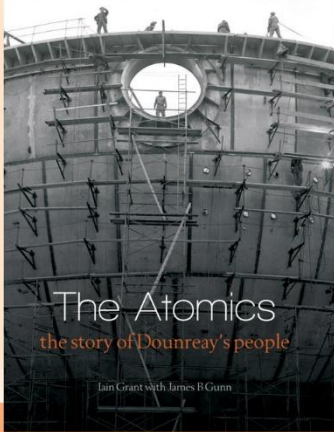
## **Miscellaneous**

James Gunn gave a talk on Dounreay's history to staff and hosted three lunchtime heritage film shows, showing the construction of the site, as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

James Gunn  
NRS Dounreay Information & Knowledge Manager

29 September 2025





**DOUNREAY'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY!**


**NEW BOOK!**

**The Atomics**  
the story of Dounreay's people  
Ian Grant with James B Gunn

- Highlights the significance of Dounreay to the nation in being the UK's centre for research and development into nuclear fast reactors
- Details how it affected a small and remote rural community, particularly the market town of Thurso, Caithness
- Concentrates on the social history and features numerous recollections of workers and people from the local community

The book is written from nearly 100 years of direct knowledge and experience of the two authors. Gunn, a Caithness farmer's son, has worked at Dounreay and the neighbouring Ministry of Defence's Naval Reactor Test Establishment for 47 years. Grant, a Caithness journalist, has reported extensively on Dounreay, its workforce and its impact on the local economy and environment, also for 47 years.

Discover Dounreay's fascinating 70-year journey and learn how the incoming workers from the South became labelled as "the Atomics".



ISBN 978-184995-606-2 232 pages 125 illustrations £17.99 (softback)

**AVAILABLE TO BUY** online from Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Caithness, KW6 6EG  
+ 44(0)1593 731333; [info@whittlespublishing.com](mailto:info@whittlespublishing.com); [www.whittlespublishing.com](http://www.whittlespublishing.com)  
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KW12 7BJ from August 2025