

DOUNREAY STAKEHOLDER GROUP SOCIO ECONOMIC SUB GROUP

Minutes of the DSG Socio Economic subgroup meeting held on Wednesday 8 October at 1330 in the Orlig meeting room, Dounreay Public Information Office and Microsoft Teams.

Present:	David Alexander (DA)	Thurso and Wick Trades Council (SESG Chair)
	Cllr Struan Mackie (SM)	Highland Council (DSG Chair)
	Donna Chambers (DC)	Deputy Chief Executive, North Highland Chamber of Commerce
	Cllr Janet McEwan (JM)	Highland Council
	Gillian Coghill (GC)	Buldoo Residents Group
	Peter Faccenda (PF)	Programme Manager, Focus North
	Iain Gregory (IG)	CHAT
	David Broughton DB)	DSG Co-opted member of the public
	Ken Nicol (KN)	DSG Co-opted member of the public
	John Deighan (JD)	DSG Co-opted member of the public
	Alan Scott (AS)	DSG Co-opted member of the public

In ATTENDANCE:

David Calder (DC)	Head of Sustainability & Socio Economics, NRS Dounreay
Jeremy Gilmour (JG)	Head of Community & Economic Development, NDA
Hannah Sutherland (HS)	NRS Dounreay Senior Socio Economics Administrator
Tina Wrighton (TW)	NRS Dounreay Stakeholder & External Relations Manager
Ferne Mill (FM)	NRS Dounreay Administrator

MINUTES

1. WELCOME

David Alexander welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the presence of new attendees, introductions were made.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Raymond Bremner	Highland Council
Magnus Davidson	NRS Dounreay Socio Economics Manager
Trudy Morris	Chief Executive, North Highland Chamber of Commerce
Cllr Matthew Reiss	Highland Council
Ron Gunn	CHAT
Sandy Mackie	DSG Co-opted member of the public
Ryan Maclean	Trust Manager, Scrabster Harbour Trust

Eann Sinclair
Roger Saxon

Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
DSG Site Restoration subgroup deputy chair

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

David Alexander noted that the minutes of the last meeting - DSG/SESG(2025)M02, July 2025 – had been endorsed at the public meeting held in September 2025. He invited members to raise any issues from the minutes. No issues were raised.

Approved at public meeting.

4. ACTIONS

David Alexander noted that the status of actions had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

DSG/BM(2025)M004/A001: There have been various discussions that have taken place, and it has been agreed to do a bench marking visit to North Wales and Cumbria on knowledge exchange on NDA socio economic projects, it has now been agreed this will take place in November for a visit to both locations.

DSG/SESG(2025)M02/A01: A discussion took place regarding the communities' fund Terms of Reference and it was noted that this has been drafted and will be circulated.

5. DOUNREAY COMMUNITY FUND REQUESTS

DA took everyone through the funding applications.

A discussion was held around funding for Wick Swimming Club to attend a training camp in Spain. The decision was made to hold on funding this application due to a lack of information. A discussion followed regarding updating the funding application form to enable more effective decision making; an action was taken to look into this.

The Rainbows requested funding for a sleepover in the wilderness. A discussion followed and the decision was made to approve this application. The amount granted was £750.

Lybster Golf Club requested funding for equipment and upgrades. A discussion followed around their application. The decision was made to consider a grant of £1,500 with the club being advised to explore other match funding opportunities to finalise their funding. On securing match funding, the application will be approved.

A website refresh was recommended for clarification of funding applications; an action was taken to update this.

6. DOUNREAY COMMUNITY FUND REQUESTS

David Alexander invited David Calder to provide key highlights from the paper.

DC updated that Dounreay had actively participated in a range of events including the 20th anniversary event, Focus North Conference, Scottish Parliament Festival of Politics—where its positive impact on the community was highlighted—as well as the Mey Games, Halkirk Games, and the Caithness County Show.

DC highlighted that Dounreay continues to promote success stories from its grant funding initiatives, notably the Live North project and website launch and the Wick River Campsite, a great example of a community project.

Several grants had been awarded recently (all details in Appendix 1 of the paper) including one to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to extend its reach into more rural areas. The Future Skills Programme in partnership with the Caithness Business Fund received NDA recognition, winning the award for ‘best socio-economic initiative’ at the recent employee awards.

With respect to workforce development, DC noted there were currently 51 apprentices in post, with 20 new starts this year—marking a 50% increase. The graduate programme also continues to grow, with 51 graduates on the system, 14 of whom joined this year compared to 11 last year.

JG then added an update from the NDA who are currently working on their Socio-Economic Annual Review report. JG also informed the group there is a stakeholder event on 3 November in which they are pushing to have the annual report available for.

DC welcomed any questions.

GC noted that the Focus North Event was a great opportunity to cascade information into the community and also asked for some detail on the NHI Farm Cluster project. DC explained it was a project across a number of north farms to establish a baseline for land use and carbon to inform recommendations for the future.

JD asked about the Mutually Agreed Voluntary Exit (MAVE) roll out and how it would impact the Dounreay site. DC explained it was voluntary and would be mutually agreed based on the needs and demands on the skills and knowledge required to support decommissioning delivery. A group discussion followed.

Donna Chambers asked about key workers housing and what the definition of a key worker was. DC said the exact definition of the term is one coined by the Highland Council but generally includes public sector workers and other workers involved in nationally significant projects.

DA opened a discussion on Murphy’s plan to create housing for workers (work camps) in Caithness. A discussion followed around the need to ensure the relevant local stakeholders were included in any onward discussions so the community would derive a lasting benefit from any development.

7. FOCUS NORTH UPDATE

David Alexander invited Peter Faccenda to provide key highlights from the paper.

PF updated on the following:

Airport – New business plan is being finalised then will be submitted to Transport Scotland.

Council Point of Delivery - looking to have the education/community POD delivered around 2030.

Focus North conference – a positive day, good feedback, well attended, focused on engaging with young people.

DA asked for an update on Sutherland Spaceport and PF said there had been no new decisions made, and circumstances are still the same.

8. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

David Alexander noted there had been no correspondence since the last meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

David Alexander opened this to members.

AS noted that the new building accommodation could create issues but will also create great opportunities within the community.

NG encouraged all members to look at the CHAT website.

GC spoke about the vehicle accident at the entrance to site, and that she had been in touch with Cllr Raymond Bremner to pursue action on this.

10. CLOSE

There being no further business David Alexander thanked everyone for their input and formally closed the meeting.

DAVID ALEXANDER
DSG Socio Economic Subgroup Chair
11 November 2025

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

DSG/SESG(2025)M03/A01: Update the socio-economic website funding page to better explain the DCF criteria and match funding guidelines.

DSG/SESG(2025)M03/A02: Update the DCF online application form with guidance on match funding.

DSG/SESG(2025)M02/A01: David Alexander to review the ongoing administration and the criteria for the Dounreay Communities Fund with David Calder and Magnus Davidson. Terms of Reference (ToR) to be circulated within the DSG.