



DSGSESG(2026)P042

## **DOUNREAY SOCIO ECONOMIC UPDATE**

*current as of 14 January 2026*

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### **Highland Investment Plan**

NRS Dounreay continues to engage with the Highland Council and Hub North on the Highland Investment Plan (HIP). Work continues on office accommodation, living accommodation (housing), and innovation. During this quarter members of the DSG SESSG, Focus North, and representation from UHI North West and Hebrides visited north Wales, including M-Sparc and Cumbria, including The Bus Station to better understand lessons and opportunities for Caithness and north Sutherland, in particular Thurso.

### **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. A draft report has now been received for comment and will be published before the end of FY 25/26.

### **Grant Funding**

Dounreay continues to provide pre-application support for socio economic funding. Circa 75% 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 000002993 Wick Harbour Authority – Masterplan 2025, £23,888, total project cost £47,775
- FR 000002958 Flow Country Conference - £4,597, total project cost £9,193

### **Procurement**

The following financial figures are for Q3 2025/2026, with the number of companies cumulative for Q1, Q2, and Q3. It should be noted that they do not sum to any total.

#### **Q3 FY25/26**

- Total Spend £30.6M including mandatory spend

- £22.4M of which is non-mandatory and non-utility
- £4.1M is with 38 companies that are Caithness owned
- £6.3M is with 16 companies with Caithness resource\*
- £10.3M is spent with Caithness owned or resourced suppliers
- £9.1M is with 255 SME suppliers (including Caithness SME)

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

- Total Spend £80.9M including mandatory spend
- £56.8M of which is non-mandatory and non-utility
- £10.5M is with 44 companies that are Caithness owned
- £18.8M is with 19 companies with Caithness resource\*
- £29.3M is spent with Caithness owned or resourced suppliers
- £22.5 M is with 379 SME suppliers (including Caithness SME)

\*Includes some mandatory spend

FY = Financial Year

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 October of this quarter highlighting recruitment of a new Commercial Business Partner.

Application and recruitment of the next cohort of graduates was advertised during this quarter with interviews due to take place in February. Indications suggest increasing interest and quality of applicants over the last two years.

David James, a Dounreay graduate, was recently profiled for the Live North Project. [Life as a Dounreay Graduate: Building a Career in Caithness & Thurso - Live North](#)

#### **Awards**

Three Dounreay nominations have been selected as finalists at the National Skills Academy for Nuclear (NSAN) Awards in March. The finalists are, David James in the Graduate category, Fallon Campbell in the Apprentice category and the FutureSkills

initiative developed in conjunction with the North Highland Chamber of Commerce in the People Power category.

## **STEM**

Dounreay is undertaking work to complete a new STEM strategy by the end of the financial year.

A verbal update will be provided of relevant STEM activity in the last quarter.

## **Dounreay Heritage**

Provided in Appendix 2

## **Visits to Dounreay**

- Dounreay Reminiscence Group Visit – 5th November

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

**13/01/2026**

## **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  £48,263 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  £26,168 paid to date
STEM activities	N/A		Funding commitment: ongoing Total annual award £25k  £12,222 paid to date

Funded Project	Completion date	Progress	Comments
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
Dunbeath and District Centre	31/12/2026		Funding commitment: 3 year Total award: £ 149,630 Yr 3: £24,938  £0 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  £75k 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  £49,999 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  £89,167 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 Baselineing 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

Funded Project	Completion date	Progress	Comments
Future Skills Graduate Scheme	31/03/2027		Funding commitment: 2 years Total award: £100,000 Yr 1: £100,000  £100k paid to date
Association of the Northern Trails, Trail Development Manager	01/07/2027		Funding commitment: 1 year Total award: £35,000 Yr 1: £35,000  £17.5k 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
Wick Harbour Authority 2025 Masterplan	21/03/2026		Funding commitment: Total award: £23,888  £0 paid to date
Flow Country Conference	13/11/2025		Funding commitment: <1 year Total award £4,597  £0 paid to date

## **Appendix 2**

### **Dounreay Heritage Initiative**

#### **Progress report – October to December 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.

## **Research projects**

The project will publish an international book about nuclear cultural heritage in early 2026 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.

The book has been selling very well with some very positive feedback. Some former employees have written e-mails and letters saying how much they enjoyed it. It is available to buy at various local shops, including the NRS Dounreay public information office and on-line from the Porto Press website. This company has recently bought over Dunbeath based Whittles Publishing, who published the book. 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) resumed on 2<sup>nd</sup> October with a meeting at Nucleus in Wick. A presentation was given by James Gunn about the new Dounreay book. A visit to Dounreay was organised for 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and all 28 participants said they thoroughly enjoyed the trip down memory lane. Many sent e-mails to thank everyone involved and to say how wonderful the visit was. A photo of the visit is shown below.

The December meeting at Nucleus was a presentation by two local graduates about their experiences of the Dounreay graduate development scheme.

There will be monthly sessions on the last Thursday of the month until March 2026, at Nucleus. The January meeting will be a presentation by a former employee and DRG member, on the early operating years of PFR. This is a great example of two-way knowledge exchange between generations.

The Nucleus Caithness Archivist gave a presentation about the DRG to the Scottish Council on Archives in Edinburgh. The DRG is a case study for the Council's "Made in Scotland" project. The DRG is viewed as a showcase example of how an archive can engage with the public for mutual benefit.

## **Miscellaneous**

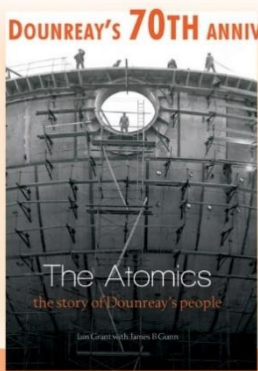
James Gunn recorded his talk about Dounreay's history, and it will be available to view by all staff via the site's intranet, early in 2026.



James Gunn

## NRS Dounreay Information & Knowledge Manager

19 December 2025



**DOUNREAY'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY!**

**NEW BOOK!**


- 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 978-184995-404-2 232 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)  
And also from NRS Dounreay public information office, 7 Olrig Street, Thurso, Caithness, KW12 7BJ from August 2025





Dounreay Heritage Officer James Gunn (extreme left) and members of the Dounreay Reminiscence Group on their visit to Dounreay on 5 November 2025.