



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 03/03/2016

Time: 1:00pm

Location: Town Hall, Wick

Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Minute Secretary)
David Flear	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
William Sutherland	HIAL
Alex Macmanus	Highland Council
Christine Dodd	Highland Council
Cllr Gillian Coghill	Highland Council
Cllr John Rosie	Highland Council
Cllr Matthew Reiss	Highland Council
Cllr Roger Saxon	Highland Council
Cllr Willie Mackay	Highland Council
Iain Moncrieff	Highland Council
Jayne Westbrook	HITRANS
Mark Norton	North Rail Line Action Group
Anna MacConnell	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
James Linklater	Serco NorthLink Ferries
Iain Wilson	The ScotRail Alliance

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all present for attending.

1.2 Apologies were received from:

Billy Manson	Association of Caithness Community Councils
June Love	Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd
David Sutherland	Highland Council (Alex Macmanus deputising)
Kris Bevan	Serco NorthLink Ferries
Steve Walker	Stagecoach North Scotland
Dr Paul Monaghan MP	UK Parliament

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 04.12.2015

2.1 There being no changes or additions, the minutes were unanimously approved

3. Review of actions from last meeting

3.1 **CTF(2015)M003/A011** – Chamber to discuss with NHS possible issues with withdrawal of 13:30 / 17:40 X99 service. **Complete**

Trudy Morris confirmed that this had been actioned and that the NHS were not aware of any issues being raised by patients – it was also noted that the NHS do try to take into account public transport when offering appointments.

3.2 **CTF(2015)M004/A001** – Iain Wilson to look at potential for provision of hot drinks on trains where full trolley service not available. **Complete**

Iain confirmed that for safety reasons this could not be done, but noted that he did not expect staff coverage to be an issue.

3.3 **CTF(2015)M004/A002** – Chamber and Councillors to take up Reay speed limit with William Gilfillan. **Complete**

Roger Saxon confirmed that this had been discussed at a recent Caithness community safety action group and that the Council should be able to change it without need for a traffic order.

It was agreed that Iain Moncrieff would look into this and clarify the situation.

CTF(2016)M001/A001 – *Iain Moncrieff to clarify situation with speed limit in Reay*

3.4 **CTF(2015)M004/A003** – *Ian Stewart to take up issues with A9 South of Berriedale. Complete*

An update was received from Doreen Cockbill at BEAR Scotland that they are planning to carry out significant works in this location in the first quarter of the 2016/17 financial year and that their Operations Manager has been in contact with Welbeck Estates and will liaise with them to carry out a tree removal exercise in the ground adjacent to the road.

David Swanson noted that he had received an update from BEAR that morning regarding planned resurfacing works at Badbea, and that he would circulate this to Forum members following the meeting.

CTF(2016)M001/A002 – *David Swanson to circulate update from BEAR Scotland on A9 Badbea resurfacing*

Roger Saxon noted that he had put a complaint in via BEAR's website and had received no response – the Chamber agreed to take this back to BEAR.

CTF(2016)M001/A003 – *Chamber to raise issue of complaints not being answered with BEAR Scotland*

3.5 **CTF(2015)M004/A004** – *Ian Stewart to take back issues with lighting on Thurso Bridge and Sir George's Street. Ongoing.*

No update was received on this matter.

3.6 **CTF(2015)M004/A005** – *Ian Stewart to circulate BEAR programme of works for 2016 once available. Ongoing*

No update was received on this matter.

3.7 **CTF(2015)M004/A006** – *Iain Wilson to confirm date for ScotRail / HITRANS rail forum. Ongoing*

No date has yet been confirmed for this – Iain said he would confirm once the date is set and that the matter was still in discussion.

3.8 **CTF(2015)M004/A007** – *Iain Wilson to look into issues with outdated information at Thurso station. Complete*

Iain noted that he had looked into this and that one poster appears to have been supplied by an external organisation and that a second is a historical rather than a factual feature, but that ScotRail would have no issues replacing it (subject to compliance with appropriate criteria).

A third poster does belong to ScotRail and Iain noted that he is awaiting further information from Eann Sinclair in order to progress with work on this.

There was some discussion of the historical feature / mural and Roger Saxon noted that the station has been adopted by Thurso Community Council. It was agreed that the Chamber would take this up with Thurso Community Council.

CTF(2016)M001/A004 – *Chamber to contact Thurso Community Council regarding possibility of replacement of mural at Thurso rail station*

3.9 **CTF(2015)M004/A008** – *Iain Wilson to look into issues with passengers stranded at Georgemas Junction. Complete*

A number of issues around this were raised with Iain, who updated on them as follows:

- 7th November, report of replacement bus not stopping at Georgemas – neither ScotRail Control nor Abellio Rail Replacement have a record of this and no issue was reported at the review following the engineering works
- 17th November, report of replacement bus not stopping at Georgemas – taxis rather than minibuses operated on this occasion and ScotRail have been advised that they stopped at Georgemas Junction
- Passengers at Georgemas not alerted to train cancellations / availability of replacement transport – Iain noted that the station has a help point and that real time information regarding cancellations and replacement transport is available via the ScotRail website and apps
- Taxis sent from Inverness to pick up passengers – if local companies do not have availability, replacement transport will be sourced from elsewhere
- Ticket holder turned away from replacement bus as no seats were left – no feedback was received to advise that someone had been turned away and no feedback to advise that further vehicles were required

It was agreed that Trudy Morris would go back to the passenger who had originally raised these issues to clarify and to discuss the availability of station help points.

CTF(2016)M001/A005 – *Trudy Morris to discuss station help points at Georgemas with passenger who raised issue*

Mark Norton queried whether there are any circumstances where a train will not stop at Georgemas due to delays – Iain Wilson noted that he was not sure, that this is done in other

areas and that where a train does not stop at a station they will ensure alternative transport is put in place.

- 3.10 **CTF(2015)M004/A009** – *Christine Dodd to find out reason for delay on Killimster Moss design work. Complete*

Christine confirmed that she had spoken with Iain Moncrieff about this – Iain noted that he would address this in his report.

- 3.11 **CTF(2015)M004/A010** – *Steve Walker to feed back on issue with passenger left at Dunbeath. Complete*

An update was received from Steve confirming that the driver had been traced and made aware of the issue, and that this would not happen in future.

- 3.12 **CTF(2015)M004/A011** – *Chamber to find out from Subsea 7 whether rail freight of pipes likely to resume. Complete*

An update was received from Willie Watt confirming that they hope to do so (subject to securing a contract) and that Georgemas still features importantly in their ability to perform efficiently.

- 3.13 **CTF(2015)M004/A012** – *Chamber to circulate Highland Council transport consultation again. Complete*

It was confirmed that this had been done.

- 3.14 **CTF(2015)M004/A013** – *Chamber to get update from HITRANS on Branchliner project. Ongoing*

No update was received on this matter.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 Trudy Morris noted that Jayne Westbrook from HITRANS would be delivering a presentation on the SPARA 2020 project.

5. Transport Updates

5.1 The ScotRail Alliance

5.1.1 Iain Wilson updated the Forum on two further queries / actions raised with him:

- Use of local suppliers for catering – contract wordings have been drawn up and they will shortly go out to tender on this. Iain emphasised the ScotRail Alliance’s commitment to local businesses.
- Lineside fencing issues – this was passed to Network Rail, who had been in touch with Gillian Coghill. Iain noted his understanding that not all the work had been completed and advised that Network Rail should be contacted regarding this.

Gillian Coghill noted that she felt there was a lot to be done in the area, that this is a safety issue, and that she would raise this with Network Rail.

5.1.2 Iain Wilson delivered an update on behalf of the ScotRail Alliance. Of note:

- Performance on the Inverness-Wick line over the last 40 days is 77% arriving on time, an improvement of 4% despite poor weather.
- With regards to the scheduled closure of Glasgow Queen Street High Level, there should be no issue for passengers travelling as far south as Perth, but to expect an additional journey time of up to 25 minutes if travelling to Glasgow on any route.
- The “Summer of Smart” campaign, aimed at rolling out smartcards across the ScotRail network, is being launched and these will be available on the Far North Line. This will be a soft launch, due to the need to test the technology in the field. Iain confirmed that the Highland Railcard will be included.
- A £5 advance fare has been introduced and this will be available on a number of routes including the Far North Line.
- A £475m train improvement programme has begun.

5.1.3 Mike Lunan queried when the smartcards would be available on the Far North Line – Iain confirmed that these would be available by August, but that he expected this to be active on the Far North Line before then.

5.1.4 Mark Norton questioned how tapping in and out with smartcards would work at unmanned stations and whether barriers would be installed at these – Iain agreed to check on this and clarify the situation.

CTF(2016)M001/A006 – *Iain Wilson to clarify situation with smartcard provision and station barriers on Far North Line*

5.1.5 David Flear queried how the train improvements would affect the Far North Line – Iain noted that the aim is to have 75% improved within 3 years and 90% within 7 years, and that the Transport Minister has said every area in Scotland will see a difference

5.1.6 Mark Norton queried whether new trains procured would be used on the Far North Line – Iain felt this was unlikely but that there would be a cascade as new trains are put on other routes.

5.1.7 Trudy Morris raised an issue where a 1st Class carriage she was travelling in was cold and the conductor didn't seem to know how to deal with it – when conductors changed at Perth, the new conductor was able to deal with the issue quickly. She emphasised that the staff are good and that the issue seems to be in training / communication.

Iain noted that in the recent National Rail Passenger survey, ScotRail achieved 90% satisfaction and that this is driven by staff.

Mark Norton seconded Trudy's point regarding the quality of ScotRail staff.

5.1.8 Roger Saxon queried whether the electrification of the Edinburgh-Glasgow line would result in trains moving to the Far North Line – Iain again noted that there would be a cascade, with trains moving to other lines, freeing up trains to move to the Far North Line.

5.1.9 Roger expressed his concern that the line was just getting refurbished 158s, and suggested that custom livery could be designed, similar to the Borders Railway, to highlight the line – Iain felt that passengers would see a difference with the refurbished trains, and agreed that custom livery was a good idea.

CTF(2016)M001/A007 – *Iain Wilson to look at possibility of custom livery promoting Far North Line on refurbished 158s*

5.1.10 There was some discussion of the purchase of the Thurso mart site and whether land had been apportioned for car parking at Thurso station.

5.1.11 Mark Norton updated the Forum that the North Rail Line Action Group would be carrying out a survey to investigate the reasons behind the continued drop in footfall through Thurso and Wick stations, and asked for the Forum's support in this.

Iain Wilson noted that ScotRail have experience in conducting such surveys and would be happy to provide guidance, and David Swanson agreed to circulate the survey once it is finalised.

CTF(2016)M001/A008 – *Chamber to circulate North Rail Line Action Group passenger survey once available*

6.2 Direct Rail Services

6.2.1 A written update was provided by Direct Rail Services (Appendix A)

- 6.2.2 David Flear felt that the lack of movement on commercial opportunities at Georgemas was unsatisfactory, and Mike Lunan agreed. It was agreed that the Chamber would write to Direct Rail Services regarding this.

CTF(2016)M001/A009 – *Chamber to write to Direct Rail Services regarding commercial development of Georgemas Junction railhead*

6.3 Berriedale Braes

- 6.3.1 Trudy Morris updated the Forum that a date had been agreed for the Public Local Inquiry and that there was still no movement on funding. She noted that she had discussed the matter with Fergus Ewing and he had agreed to take it back to Scottish Government.
- 6.3.2 Roger Saxon expressed his surprise that this was the case, given that it is an election year, and it was agreed that the Chamber would write to all the constituency candidates for the Scottish Parliament on the importance of this.

CTF(2016)M001/A010 – *Chamber to write to constituency candidates for Scottish Parliament regarding importance of Berriedale works*

6.4 Highland Council

- 6.4.1 Iain Moncrieff delivered an update on behalf of Highland Council, and provided a written copy of this subsequently (Appendix B)
- 6.4.2 Trudy Morris enquired as to how many staff the Community Services team would be losing in the area – Iain confirmed that two from the roads team would be leaving but that they have a plan in place.
- 6.4.3 With regards to SSE road damage, Iain noted that the Council prefer to work with companies to resolve issues such as this, but that they will take legal recourse if this is not an option. Trudy enquired as to the timescale for works to repair damage – Iain noted that they would be issuing a schedule to SSE on Friday 4th March and would meet with them on the 10th.

The expectation is that, for dangerous sections (damage deeper than 100mm), SSE will make an interim repair within 24 hours and a permanent fix within 7 days. Iain noted that they will work with the Highland Council depot on the Thurso side and the Wick side will be put to a contractor.

Iain noted that they have asked for effective cleaning of the roads, as this has been leading to inefficiency of fixes – SSE have hired a vacuum sweeper to address this. The Council want a monthly review with SSE and are confident that the work will get done.

- 6.4.5 David Flear noted his pleasure that this damage is being addressed, but felt that if the Thurso depot has spare capacity this should be used to address issues such as potholes in Halkirk, rather than carrying out work for SSE. He felt that these potholes were a danger to road users.
- 6.4.6 Iain noted that this capacity relates to the depot is also doing additional works linked to separate funding and that some of this work lies on the same route, so there is some synergy.
- 6.4.7 David Flear raised issues regarding the Halkirk-Glengolly road, feeling that it is unsafe and that the classification as a B road does not match its use as a main route for buses, etc.. There was some discussion as to whether it could be reclassified, particularly with regards to winter maintenance.
- 6.4.8 Iain explained that he was not averse to reexamining the classification, but noted that there is limited capacity and that extensions in gritting in one area will lead to cuts in others. He noted that decisions are made early each morning based on forecasts and salt sensors, and that around 70% of the fleet is GPS tracked.
- 6.4.9 David noted his concern that traffic on the route has changed and that it is up to Councillors to decide the priority of routes – Iain agreed to provide information on the priority of the route.

CTF(2016)M001/A011 – *Iain Moncrieff to circulate information on priority one gritting routes in Caithness*

- 6.4.10 Matthew Reiss noted that SSE had responded to pressure from the Council, but that as the principal contractor they have a responsibility to work with their subcontractors to ensure that issues are addressed. He noted that, with regards to the Watten-Mybster road, the damage is ruts rather than potholes, and felt that passing places on the road are not large enough – he raised the example of another route where the contractor improved passing places and put in new ones. Matthew felt concerned that something could go badly wrong on this route.
- 6.4.11 Iain noted that he was using the term “pothole” to refer to a range of damaged sections of road, and that the damage to the road is a result of SSE’s failure to manage the situation. He further noted that another proposed route is currently going through the process and that the Council are looking for major improvements to be made to roads before work starts and for SSE to deal with defects as they arise.
- 6.4.12 Gillian Coghill raised the issue of gritting again and her feeling that there is a need to review gritting routes in line with bus routes – Christine Dodd explained that this is done every year and that the Council is currently out to tender on public transport contracts and that this is expected to be complete by July. It was felt that this would be a good time to review gritting routes, and Gillian and Iain agreed to look into this.

CTF(2016)M001/A012 – *Iain Moncrieff & Gillian Coghill to review winter maintenance route priorities once new bus routes confirmed*

6.4.13 Matthew Reiss noted his view that all school transport should be required to be fitted with all season / winter tyres during appropriate times of the year.

6.4.14 With regards to the Killimster Moss, it was asked whether someone from Development & Infrastructure could come to the next meeting to update on this. Iain agreed to invite a colleague to do so.

CTF(2016)M001/A013 – *Iain Moncrieff to invite Ian MacGillivray to present on B876 at next meeting of the Forum*

6.4.15 With regards to parking in disabled bays in Thurso, Iain noted that his team has made efforts to move those parked illegally in disabled bays and HGVs partially parked on footways.

6.4.16 There was some discussion of the recent flooding in Halkirk – Iain noted that the recent works put in following the last flood worked.

6.4.17 John Rosie raised the design of the Killimster Moss – Iain noted that there had been technical input from the Finnish roads authority and that, despite being a good design, it has now exceeded its intended design life by around 300%

6.5 BEAR Scotland

6.5.1 There was no update provided from BEAR Scotland – it was agreed that the Chamber would go back to BEAR to seek this.

6.6 Stagecoach

6.6.1 No representative was present and no update provided – Trudy Morris asked that if attendees had issues with the bus service, they forward these on to the Chamber to be raised at the Caithness Bus Users Group

6.7 Scrabster Harbour

6.7.1 A written update was provided by Sandy Mackie – see Appendix C

6.8 Wick Harbour Authority

6.8.1 No attendee was present and no update was provided.

6.9 Serco NorthLink Ferries

6.9.1 James Linklater delivered an update on behalf of Serco NorthLink Ferries. Of note:

- January passenger numbers are up 30%, cars up 42%
- Year-to-date passenger numbers are up 3%, cars up 4%
- The *MV Hamnavoe* is currently in dry dock, with the *MV Isle of Lewis* covering the route – the *Hamnavoe* is expected to be back in service on 15th March
- There were 3 cancellations in January and 1 in February
- There will be two additional three-sailing days on 26th March and 9th April, with the peak timetable beginning 26th May
- The Caithness business guide on the NorthLink website currently has 15 entries for Caithness – James asked if attendees could raise awareness of this again
- The NorthLink website is currently being redesigned, and there will be some intermittent issues during this period
- Serco NorthLink continue to sponsor community groups in Caithness, and issue 4 of the onboard magazine will have specific features on Caithness

6.9.2 Trudy Morris noted that Venture North had recently launched a new video and asked if this could be shown onboard the *Hamnavoe* and on the NorthLink website – James thought it could be shown on Facebook and possibly on the website.

CTF(2016)M001/A014 – Chamber to forward Venture North details to James Linklater for promotion of new video

6.9.3 Anna MacConnell asked if there was any analysis available of freight volumes from Scrabster to Orkney – James did not have this available but agreed to follow up with Kris Bevan.

CTF(2016)M001/A015 – James Linklater to follow up with Kris Bevan on analysis of freight from Scrabster to Orkney

6.9.4 James noted that NorthLink are always looking at options to try and increase freight on the route.

6.10 Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL

6.10.1 William Sutherland gave an update on behalf of Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL. Of note:

- Works on the apron have been completed and the hangar doors reclad
- GNSS procedures are expected to be approved by June 2016
- HIAL now have a Twitter feed for Wick John O’Groats Airport
- Some work will be done to extend the car park, with support from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority – around 50 extra spaces
- Eastern Airways have changed their timetable on the Wick-Aberdeen route

- 6.10.2 With regards to the Wick-Aberdeen route, Mike Lunan queried whether Eastern Airways are pulling out – William clarified that they are reducing the service as a result of the drop off in oil & gas traffic. He noted that there had been no consultation on the changes.
- 6.10.3 Trudy Morris updated the Forum that the next meeting of the Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee (WJACC) had been moved forward to 21st April to discuss these issues.
- 6.10.4 Trudy noted that there are a number of actions from the WJACC relating to the schedule change.
- 6.10.5 Trudy updated the Forum that Maurice Boyle from Loganair had given a presentation to the WJACC and that they are undertaking a number of actions to improve punctuality and technical issues, as well as carrying out an update to the aircraft interiors and livery. She noted that there had been some discussions around route development and sustainability through e.g. the use of Public Service Obligations.
- 6.10.6 Mike Lunan enquired as to the possibility of a Wick-Glasgow flight – William felt that it was important to support the existing route to Edinburgh. Trudy explained that work needs to be done to identify potential routes and a business case put together.
- 6.10.7 Roger Saxon enquired about a Kirkwall-Wick flight – William felt that this would result in capacity on flights from Wick being used by passengers from the islands.
- 6.10.8 David Flear noted that, with regards to changes in the NHS, a flight from Inverness-Wick may help resolve some issues. He further noted that air ambulance traffic to Wick has increased dramatically. William explained that the nature of these flights had changed. Jayne Westbrook noted that HITRANS had been in talks to bring in an Orkney-Wick flight to allow islanders to use Caithness General Hospital, rather than having to travel to Aberdeen.
- 6.10.9 There was some further discussion of a possible Wick-Inverness flight, but it was not felt likely that this would be developed.

6.11 HITRANS – SPARA 2020

- 6.11.1 Jayne Westbrook from HITRANS gave a presentation on the Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports (SPARA 2020) project. Of note:
- The project is part of the Northern Periphery & Arctic Programme 2014-2020 and is designed to address challenges facing peripheral and remote airports, help to maximize revenue in challenging settings and increase self-sufficiency and resilience
 - It is being delivered by a number of partners Europe-wide, with those in the Highlands being HITRANS and University of the Highlands and Islands
 - There are five major work packages, as follows:
 - Low Carbon Solutions – looking at surface access, biofuel, and low carbon transport including electric cars and bikes

- Non-Aeronautical Services – auditing and identifying best practice in delivery of non-aeronautical services at rural airports
- Technology-Driven Solutions – looking at remote tower technologies, new check-in & security products, best practices for remote training, and airport collaborative decision making systems
- Innovation Network – developing a sustainable peripheral aviation network
- Improved Methodologies & Assessments – looking at the social / cultural importance of remote airports, benchmarking and economic impact studies, and development of a methodological toolkit for economic impact studies
- Key aims of the project are to:
 - Deliver increased innovation to maintain remote airports
 - Make airports greener
 - Better exploit non-aeronautical potential
 - Reduce the cost burden to governments
 - See greater integration with local communities & businesses
 - Enhance technological competence

6.11.2 Trudy Morris enquired as to how Wick John O’Groats Airport could fit in to this project – Jayne noted that they are trying to find airports which are the best fit for each work package and that there are several opportunities.

6.11.3 There was some discussion of this, and it was felt that low carbon transport, economic impact studies and non-aeronautical services were all of interest to the airport. It was agreed that Jayne would feed back to the Forum on opportunities for involvement of Wick John O’Groats Airport in the project.

CTF(2016)M001/A016 – *Jayne Westbrook to come back to Chamber regarding opportunities for Wick John O’Groats Airport involvement in SPARA 2020*

6.11.4 Roger Saxon enquired as to whether studies on e.g. economic impact would be done as a desk study or whether there would be local consultation – Jayne confirmed that there would be some local consultation.

6.11.5 Jayne noted that there is a newsletter for the SPARA 2020 project and that attendees could contact her if they were interested in this.

7. Press Communications

7.1 It was felt that communications should highlight the Council’s work with SSE to address damage to the roads.

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 John Rosie again raised the issue of safety on the Berriedale Braes and suggested that the Forum ask for a meeting with the Minister for Transport to raise this. Trudy noted that the Forum had written to the Minister regarding this on a number of occasions, and that an action was taken earlier regarding Berriedale.
- 8.2 David Flear noted that the issue is not just about safety but about economic development.
- 8.3 Trudy suggested that, following the forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections, the Forum invite the new Minister for Transport to discuss the issue of Berriedale.
- 8.4 Trudy noted the sad news of John Green's passing and paid tribute to him on his involvement in the Transport Forum and his championing of local issues. There was general agreement.
- 8.5 There was some discussion about the possibility of updating the "A Transport Vision for Caithness" document. Trudy agreed to discuss this with CNSRP.
- CTF(2016)M001/A017** – *Trudy Morris to follow up with Eann Sinclair on possible refresh of "A Transport Vision for Caithness"*
- 8.6 Christine Dodd noted that she is retiring at the end of May. Trudy wished her the best for her retirement and thanked Christine for her contribution to the Forum.

9. Date of the next meeting

- 9.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in June, date and venue TBC.

10. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

CTF(2015)M004/A004 – *Ian Stewart to take back issues with lighting on Thurso Bridge and Sir George's Street.*

CTF(2015)M004/A005 – *Ian Stewart to circulate BEAR programme of works for 2016 once available.*

CTF(2015)M004/A006 – *Iain Wilson to confirm date for ScotRail / HITRANS rail forum.*

CTF(2015)M004/A013 – *Chamber to get update from HITRANS on Branchliner project.*

11. Actions arising from this meeting

CTF(2016)M001/A001 – *Iain Moncrieff to clarify situation with speed limit in Reay*

CTF(2016)M001/A002 – *David Swanson to circulate update from BEAR Scotland on A9 Badbea resurfacing*

CTF(2016)M001/A003 – *Chamber to raise issue of complaints not being answered with BEAR Scotland*

CTF(2016)M001/A004 – *Chamber to contact Thurso Community Council regarding possibility of replacement of mural at Thurso rail station*

CTF(2016)M001/A005 – *Trudy Morris to discuss station help points at Georgemas with passenger who raised issue*

CTF(2016)M001/A006 – *Iain Wilson to clarify situation with smartcard provision and station barriers on Far North Line*

CTF(2016)M001/A007 – *Iain Wilson to look at possibility of custom livery promoting Far North Line on refurbished 158s*

CTF(2016)M001/A008 – *Chamber to circulate North Rail Line Action Group passenger survey once available*

CTF(2016)M001/A009 – *Chamber to write to Direct Rail Services regarding commercial development of Georgemas Junction railhead*

CTF(2016)M001/A010 – *Chamber to write to constituency candidates for Scottish Parliament regarding importance of Berriedale works*

CTF(2016)M001/A011 – *Iain Moncrieff to circulate information on priority one gritting routes in Caithness*

CTF(2016)M001/A012 – *Iain Moncrieff & Gillian Coghill to review winter maintenance route priorities once new bus routes confirmed*

CTF(2016)M001/A013 – *Iain Moncrieff to invite Ian MacGillivray to present on B876 at next meeting of the Forum*

CTF(2016)M001/A014 – *Chamber to forward Venture North details to James Linklater for promotion of new video*

CTF(2016)M001/A015 – *James Linklater to follow up with Kris Bevan on analysis of freight from Scrabster to Orkney*

CTF(2016)M001/A016 – *Jayne Westbrook to come back to Chamber regarding opportunities for Wick John O’Groats Airport involvement in SPARA 2020*

CTF(2016)M001/A017 – *Trudy Morris to follow up with Eann Sinclair on possible refresh of “A Transport Vision for Caithness”*

Appendix A – DRS Update

DRS continue to support the NDA with their mission to deliver 'safe and sustainable solutions to the challenge of nuclear clean-up and waste management of the UK's nuclear legacy'. Work in relation to the Exotics Programme continues and DRS are also working with MOD to commence Fuel Movements between MoD Vulcan and Sellafield.

Both of these projects support what Geogemas Junction was purpose built for. DRS are aware that the facility must remain an available option for these movements however, as part of the long term legacy of the facility following decommissioning, we are engaging with and continue to promote the facility and explore options available into the future.

Following on from the update in September, DRS continue to engage with a number of customers in regards to the use of Geogemas Junction. These discussions are framed against two main principles; the business has to be commercially viable without subsidy and the business must not clash with core requirements of the facility.

In addition, DRS have been working with Network Rail, Transport Scotland and other operators to help produce long term route strategy for the Scottish rail network and to maximise the potential for the facility, this is currently at consultation stage.

DRS are currently renewing the TESCO contract and once completed we have the opportunity to discuss a functionality test run up to Geogemas. We look forward to updating you on these discussions and other developments.

Appendix B – Highland Council update

Community Services Organisation

In the interim Caithness road operations will be managed by I Moncrieff and works organised by K Mackay.

Operational Issues

- SSE Road Damage
Significant damage to road infrastructure by SSE's infrastructure projects across Caithness.
SSE recognise the damage and the hazards to motorists but delay by contractor to make good repairs has exacerbated the problems due to freeze/thaw cycle and continued trafficking on weakened sections.
Interim permanent repairs about to be undertaken to make safe hazardous sections.
Additional repairs to be undertaken at the end of the project to repair damaged roads that are not hazardous.
Minor potholes repaired by emulsion and chip.
All roads are video'd every fortnight
Monthly review meeting
- General Maintenance
 - At least one day per week spent on patching
- Winter
 - Some gritters recently broken down but routes accommodated by extending other routes, principally in Sutherland

Infrastructure

- Noss Primary School
 - Works now nearing completion.
 - Recent winter weather and morning treatment delays progress.
- Wick Campus
 - Revised traffic calming on Station Rd. Consulted with caravan park and RBWCC.
 - One way traffic order starting this month
 - 20mph traffic order starting this month
 - Circular letter issued to residents directly affected by build outs.
- A99 Keiss – N Keiss Road Improvements
 - Overall 70% complete
 - Excavation and sub base 95%
 - Drainage 100%
 - Fencing 95%
 - Footway 100%
 - Surfacing 35%
- B876 Killimster Moss
 - Designed by Development & Infrastructure
 - Funding for FY 16/17 and 17/18
 - Currently inspection and patching on alternate fortnightly basis.
- Adoption of Roads
 - Wick Lanes & Car Parks - progressing
- Traffic Orders
 - Girmigoe St – Leith Walk and Ackergill St one way orders about to be made.
 - Shore St & Falconer Water Court one way orders about to be issued to statutory consultees.
 - No further progress for:
 - Janet Street Parking Restrictions
 - Disabled on street parking order for Thurso
 - Thurso Traffic Management Order Review

Appendix C – Scrabster Harbour update

1. TRAFFIC STATISTICS

In the period April 2015 to February 2016, there were 2,028 vessel arrivals, an increase of 4% on the corresponding period last year.

Vessel tonnage, in the period, amounted to 7.701 million tonnes, this is also 4% higher than last year.

2. FERRY

The Hamnavoe is currently at Rosyth for the scheduled 2016 dry-docking. She is expected to return to service mid-month. The CalMac vessel, Isle of Lewis, is providing cover during the period. A number of modifications to the linkspan and fendering have been made to accommodate the vessel.



Transport Scotland have commissioned consultants Peter Brett Associates to conduct an appraisal of options for the 2018 Northern Isles Ferry Services Contract. Consultation with stakeholders and the public is one of the early stages of the option appraisal. In this connection the Trust has spoken with the consultants and it is understood that other local stakeholders have been contacted. The consultation covers the issues and opportunities in relation to the current

service e.g. timetables, capacity, costs, vessels etc. Additional consultation meetings/events will be held as the study progresses.

3. FISHING

A total of 258,340 boxes have been landed at Scrabster during the period April 2015 to February 2016. Whilst this is 4% lower than the previous year, port fishing revenues are ahead of last year.

The new landing obligation for discards came into force at the beginning of January. To date the level of discards has been low reflecting the initial species covered by the obligation.

The Trust is progressing an application to the new European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for a new ice plant to serve the port.



The official Scottish Government fishing statistics for 2014 were released at the end of 2015. The statistics shows Scrabster was the second highest landing port for demersal species (whitefish), behind Peterhead but ahead of Shetland. This shows the importance of Scrabster to the fishing sector and should aid the Ice Plant application.

4. OIL AND GAS

Scrabster continues to buck the trend of reduced oil and gas activity due to the sustained fall in the price of oil. Vessel and tonnage numbers for the year to date are up 27% and 66% respectively.

5. GENERAL CARGO

General cargo activity continues to be steady over the past quarter comprising timber, fish farm related cargoes, salmon and heavy lifts. Four transformers, for the Spittal substation arrived over the festive period and were stored on the Jubilee Quay prior to being moved to site. Two transformers weighed 170 tonnes each with the other two units being 128 tonnes each.





Further transformer shipments are expected over the coming year. The volumes of cargo on the Eimship service from Faroes increased in the lead up to Christmas. The November and December port calls brought 5,281 tonnes of fish cargo compared to 8,085 tonnes in the seven month period between April and October 2015.

6. CRUISE

There are twelve cruise calls booked for 2016, and a further seven confirmed and one provisional booking for 2017. The Harbour Master will be attending the annual Global Seatrade event in Fort Lauderdale being held 14-17th March.

2nd March 2016