



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM

1 June 2006, 7.00pm, Wick Town Hall

Present: Cllr John Green (Chairman)
Mrs Coreen Campbell, Caithness Community Transport
Mr Mike Lunan, Friends of the Far North Line
Mr John Crowden, Association of Caithness Community Councils
Miss Angela Donaldson, H & I Airports Limited
Mr Richard Guest, The Highland Council
Mr Bert Macleod, Highlands & Islands Federation of Small Businesses
Eann Sinclair, Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise
Cllr Graeme Smith
Cllr Billy Mowat
Ms Anna MacConnell, Caithness Partnership

Apologies Mr George Bruce, OBE, Caithness Partnership
Mr John Banister, Wick Airport Consultative Committee
Mrs Carroll Buxton, Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise
Mrs Elizabeth Marshall
Miss Carol Gunn, CASE
Cllr David Flear
Mr Brian Leonard, Scrabster Harbour Trust
Ms Louise Smith

1 Minutes
Minutes of the previous meeting (31.03.06) were agreed. Proposed Mike Lunan, seconded Coreen Campbell.

2 Matters arising
The Forum welcomed Louise Smith's recent appointment to HITRANS.

Eann Sinclair reported that the HIE sponsored assessment of the railways in Highland is almost at draft stage and a draft will be available within the next few weeks.

3 Caithness Transport Vision

A draft of the Vision document was available and copies will be circulated to all Forum members for comment on the text ¹. Funding to print 1000 copies is being made available from Highland Council Area Committee and an application to CASE for funds is pending approval, expected very soon. A preferred quote has been accepted from Highland Printers and they have indicated that the work could be turned around fairly quickly on receipt of photographs and text. A colour proof should be available in the next few weeks and will be sent to Forum members for comment. ²

John Green drew the meetings attention to Transport Scotland's 2006/7 priorities which showed no significant infrastructure projects north of Aberdeen. It was suggested that detail of minor infrastructure projects should be sought. ³

4 Orkney/Caithness Transport Forum meeting

Provisionally the 26th June has been set as a date for a meeting with members of the Orkney Forum (Fred Farmer, John O' Groat Ferries, Andrew Banks, Pentland Ferries, Gareth Crighton, Northlink and Alision Muir, OIC. Bob Sclater to be invited. Caithness Forum members would be notified of confirmed details nearer the time, although it is likely the meeting would be in the afternoon in Thurso. Mike Lunan, Bert MacLeod, Eann Sinclair, John Green, John Crowden, Richard guest and Graeme Smith expressed an interest in attending the meeting.

5 Scotland's National Transport Strategy

A consultation document has been produced by Scottish Executive and responses are sought by early July. Members felt that a response should be returned by the Forum and this would be co-ordinated by Anna and copied round members. Copies of HC response to be circulated to aid deliberations⁴ It was suggested that the forum's response should be copied to HC as well as Scottish Executive and should include reference to the areas where the Forum agrees with HC response in order to strengthen their argument, and also the issues that are not addressed by the HC and need to be put forward. The Forum should also point out where the wrong questions have been asked in the consultation or questions that should have been included and were not.

6 Freight Quality Partnerships

A Scottish Executive document detailing how to set up Freight Quality Partnerships was circulated for discussion. It was agreed that a way must be sought to encourage business to use rail for freight and that it is appropriate that the Forum make representations to businesses such as Somerfield, Tesco, Homebase and Asda to find out if there are obstructions are to using rail and to

¹ ACTION: A MACCONNELL COMPLETE

² ACTION: A MACCONNELL COMPLETE

³ ACTION: A MACCONNELL COMPLETE

⁴ ACTION: A MACCONNELL COMPLETE

encourage the use of rail. Once the Vision document has been agreed the Forum will contact Frank Roach of Highland Rail Partnership and determine the cost of transporting rail by freight in order to better inform the large retailers. Mr Roach will be invited to attend meeting of the Forum.

Air freight tends to be used for goods such as live shellfish which have a high mortality rate in transit. For other goods the cost tends to be prohibitive.

7 Updates

Air the 40% discount scheme has had some teething problems which is understandable considering the size of the population involved and speed at which it has been implemented. Uptake in Caithness appears to be good but there are no figures available yet for how many seats have been booked under the scheme. HIAL is working with the airlines find a way of applying the discount to the £99 fare which is already available.

Loganair is now offering a Wick-Glasgow flight departing Wick 11.00 and 1.20 from Glasgow north. Press releases will be issues shortly.

Rail the timetable has been amended to allow the Aberdeen train to connect with the last train north.

Mike Lunan will meet First Scotrail in June to look at rolling stock and he will suggest that room is made for 6 bicycles on rolling stock on the North Line. The owner of the Bike Shop in Thurso has been keeping a dossier of problems cyclists have encountered when attempting to travel by rail. Mike Lunan will contact Mr Robinson to discuss.⁵

Road Jamie Stone MSP had written to the NDA suggesting that capital spending on the roads network is of economic significance to Caithness and must be considered in any socio-economic deliberations. The NDA had responded that transport links were an area that could be considered for funding but that it is important that NDA funding goes to projects that are a priority in the area. Following discussion it was agreed that the Forum should attempt to ensure that transport is included in any socio-economic plan and John Farquhar or Dr Ian Roxburgh be invited to meet the Forum once the Vision document is completed.

Sea Wick Harbour entrance is currently being dredged and when completed up to 5 feet of sand will have been removed allowing deeper draft vessels to enter the harbour. This should suffice for about 5 years.

8 AOCB

A question was raised regarding the links between the Forum and HITRANS. This would be discussed at a further meeting.

9 DONM

Tuesday 15 August, Thurso. Venue to be confirmed.

⁵ ACTION: MIKE LUNAN COMPLETE