



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN GAMES ROOM 2, ASSEMBLY ROOMS, WICK, ON 25 OCTOBER 2006

1. Present

Ms Louise Smith, HITRANS, Ormlie Community Association
Ms Elizabeth Marshall, Highland Council
Mr Doug Shanks, UKAEA
Mr Brian Leonard, Scrabster Harbour Trust
Councillor Graeme Smith, Highland Council
Mr Mike Lunan, Friends of the Far North Line
Councillor John Green, Highland Council
Mrs Coreen Campbell, Caithness Community Transport
Mrs Sandra McCaughey, Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise
Mr Bert Macleod, Highlands & Islands Federation of Small Businesses
Mr Richard Guest, Highland Council
Mr George Bruce OBE, Caithness Partnership
Chief Inspector John McDonald, Northern Constabulary
Ms Anna MacConnell, Caithness Partnership

In Attendance

Mr Andrew Capes, HITRANS

2. Apologies

Mr John Banister, Wick Airport Consultative Committee
Mr John MacFadzean, Scotland Transserv
Councillor David Flear, Highland Council
Mrs Carroll Buxton, Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise
Miss Angela Donaldson, Highlands & Islands Airports Limited
Mr John Crowden, Association of Caithness Community Councils
Mr John Farquhar, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Mrs Veda Swanson, Highland Country Buses

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record subject to amendments to the section covering Frank Roach's talk and Scotland Transerve's winter maintenance programme.

4. Matters Arising

NORTHLINK

Elaine Tulloch, Marketing Project Manager for Northlink, had been contacted to request inclusion of Caithness companies in 2007 Marketing Brochure and to invite her to a meeting. Ms Tulloch will be able to attend a future meeting and requested updates or outcomes from this meeting. ¹

5. Pilot Journey Share Scheme

Andrew Capes, Travel Plans Officer HITRANS, provided details of a proposed pilot journey share scheme aimed at encouraging employees, businesses and individuals to improve efficiency in terms of car use and reduce volume of cars used. A national Lift Share Scheme has been operating for 7 years and has 133,000 people signed up UK wide. The scheme is internet based. HITRANS proposes to launch the scheme in Caithness initially and then following monitoring, to roll out to the rest of the Highlands & Islands. Mr Capes proposed that a locally identifiable scheme be launched jointly by Caithness Partnership and HITRANS. This was agreed on condition that there is no legal liability or cost implications for the Partnership and subject to approval from the full Partnership.² Members raised issues such as safety and insurance implications for participants and were reassured by Mr Capes that measures are in place to avoid putting individuals in danger, but that participants joined at their own risk. He reiterated the success of the scheme elsewhere and suggested members refer to the Lift Share website for detailed information – www.liftshare.com

In terms of reducing car use it was suggested (GS) that agency staff and representatives should lead by example and share lifts where possible. John Green suggested that the scheme should be marketed on economic and environmental grounds e.g. “saving the planet and saving your pocket”.

6. Updates

AIR

At a recent meeting of Wick Airport Consultative Committee, it had been agreed that a study into the benefits of extending the runway, improving lighting and business development within the hangar would be commissioned by CASE.

HIAL had reiterated at that meeting that it will be at least 5 years before GPS is available. Each aircraft using a GPS facility would need to be fitted with £30K work of equipment and the associated airport equipment is likely to cost approximately £200K. NDA Chief Executive Ian Roxburgh had indicated a willingness to support introduction of a GPS landing aid. Elizabeth Marshall noted that Orkney had 15% more flights into Kirkwall once their modern landing aid was installed and suggested that we should be planning now for GPS, assisting with trials and encouraging certification of GPS use by CAA to be speeded up. George Bruce felt that inward investment is going to be difficult to achieve if Caithness doesn't have proper facilities. Sandra McCaughey suggested that

¹ ACTION: A MACCONNELL

² ACTION: A MACCONNELL

we have to do what we can to develop and protect Wick Airport and gather information that validates the arguments for improvements. It was agreed that the Forum needs to work with HIAL to get Wick higher up their list of priorities. The Forum need to list the issues and get in touch with the NDA to see if the NDA would fund putting together the business case. ³

ROADS

Following his visit to Berriedale Braes, Tavish Scott, Minister for Transport, had written to Jamie Stone MSP, stating that there would be no funding for major improvements until at least 2012. Meantime Transport Scotland has commissioned a study into design options for improving Berriedale Braes, the results of which are due by the end of November.

Richard Guest reported that the contract to improve the A9 at Helmsdale had been awarded and work will start January 07. A plea needs to be made for the stretch of road from the top of Dunbeath to Borgue to be straightened and the Lybster to Wick stretch improved.

The existing temporary repairs on the A99 south of Wick are dangerous. CTF to contact Gordon Sinclair to ask which area will be dealt with following the A9 improvement at Helmsdale starting in January.⁴

Gordon Sinclair has agreed to meet Richard Guest to discuss a new drainage scheme that has been designed for the Wick South Road where houses have been repeatedly flooded.

John McDonald and Richard Guest had met representatives of Scotland Transserv to agree new position of snow gates. John McFadzean to be asked to provide an update on snowgate.⁵

RAIL

CTF to write to Russels to find out what the barrier is to use of rail for freight on north line.⁶

Network Rail Draft Route Utilization Strategy (RUS) is out for consultation until 15 November. Mike Lunan offered to draft a response from CTF.⁷

SEA

Brian Leonard reported that Scrabster Harbour Trust is increasingly hopeful that the Norona (Faroese ferry) will be landing in Scrabster next summer. Immigration and customs facilities need to be set up and the link span adapted. Passenger predictions are good for this Faroese and Icelandic link. The oil sector at Scrabster has shown an

³ ACTION: CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM

⁴ ACTION: CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM

⁵ ACTION: A MACCONNELL

⁶ ACTION: A MACCONNELL

⁷ ACTION: M LUNAN

increase in business over the last few months. The tourism information side needs to improve to match traffic, possibly a booklet on what to see and do in Caithness is needed.

Andrew Banks is hoping to have a new boat running from Gills to Orkney in the Spring, doubling his existing capacity. If he's given permission to land at Burray, a shuttle service will be provided every 25 minutes. This will have a detrimental effect on the Groat's ferry.

7. Transport Vision – Next Steps

Several very positive responses had been received re the Transport Vision. In addition the Access Forum had flagged up that there is nothing in the document about walking. A member of the public had raised the fact that there is no reference to public bus services in the document. RSPB had responded with support for getting freight off the roads onto rail. Anna had asked Kenny Graham at RSPB if they could write to the supermarkets supporting the CTF stance on rail freight and he had agreed to raise it with his superiors.

Railway Consultants CORUS are seeking £9K to carry out a study into the likely cost of a Dornoch Rail Link and are looking for support.

It was agreed that CTF need not take the same stance as Friends of the Far North Line regarding the Dornoch Rail Bridge but must push for what's best for Caithness. We need to find out whether the Association of Caithness Community Councils petition (No. 894) for north line was accepted by the Petitions Committee.⁸

8. Timetabling

This has been raised again as it came up at the first meeting in 2005 and no action has been identified yet there are numerous timetabling issues being raised locally. It was agreed that a list of timetabling problems be compiled and that David Summers of Highland Council be invited to the next meeting to discuss how we can take this forward.⁹

Members to let Anna know what the issues are.¹⁰

9. AOCB

Mike Lunan indicated that he had been invited to assist Sutherland Partnership's newly established Transport Forum and suggested that there are areas that the two forums could work together on. Should there be any conflict he would withdraw in favour of CTF.

⁸ ACTION: A MACCONNELL

⁹ ACTION: A MACCONNELL

¹⁰ ACTION : CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM MEMBERS

Chief Inspector John McDonald asked what will happen to the community planning partnerships in the light of local authority reorganization. It was suggested that the Caithness Partnership may be the body that brings together the proposed 3 ward forums, but the position was not clear yet.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 12 January 2007 in Thurso. Venue and time to be advised.