



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 08.03.13

Time: 11:30am

Location: Mackays Hotel, Wick

Present

Trudy Morris	Chief Executive, Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
David Swanson	Marketing & Communications, Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Minute Secretary)
Peter Body	Director, Caithness Chamber of Commerce
June Love	DSRL / Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Anna MacConnell	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
Mark Norton	Convener, DORLAG
William Sutherland	Station Manager, Wick John O'Groats Airport
Grenville Johnston	Chair, HIAL
Mark Stuart	Director of Operations, HIAL
Billy Maclean	Operations Manager, Stagecoach Caithness
Christine Dodd	Local Transport Officer, Highland Council
Cllr. Gail Ross	Highland Council
Steve Walker	Managing Director, Stagecoach Highlands
Iain Moncrieff	TEC Services, Highland Council
Alex Macmanus	Highland Council
Cathel Macaskill	Customer Service Manager, Scotland TranServ
John Green	Caithness Partnership
Eann Sinclair	CNSRP
Gordon Doull	Wick Harbour Authority
James Linklater	Customer Care Manager, Serco NorthLink Ferries
Kris Bevan	Freight Manager, Serco NorthLink Ferries
Cyril Annal	St. Margaret's Hope Pier Trustees

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: Ken Nicol, Sandy Mackie, Gordon Mackenzie, Fiona Mackenzie, Bert Macleod, Frank Roach, Thurso Community Council, David Sutherland

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 14.12.12

- 2.1 The minutes were unanimously approved

3. Review of actions from last meeting

- 3.1 **CTF(2012)M001/A001** – *Trudy Morris to write a letter to John Swinney, John Thurso, Keith Brown and Rob Gibson with reference to the shovel-readiness of the Berriedale Braes upgrades. Other organisations to write supporting letters* – Complete. Letters were written and responses received from John Thurso and Keith Brown (copies circulated via email and at the meeting).

Gail Ross noted that Rob Gibson had this week spoken with Keith Brown and that the study is going out to tender, but she was unsure how long this process would take. Trudy had received an update from Andy Anderson at Transport Scotland, hoping that the consultant engineer will be in place by April.

Trudy further noted that no commitment had been received from Scottish Government to actually make this a shovel-ready project. Trudy asked Gail to feed back to the government on behalf of the forum.

CTF(2013)M001/A001 – *Gail Ross to feed back to Scottish Government regarding shovel-readiness of Berriedale Braes*

- 3.2 **CTF(2012)M001/A002** – *Forum members to assist Iain Moncrieff in distribution of Highland Council winter driving advice to members* – Complete. Information distributed by a number of organisations.

- 3.3 **CTF(2012)M001/A003** – *Trudy Morris to consult with members on production of briefing note for Wick / Thurso town plan charrettes taking place in February 2013* – Complete. The Chamber, with input from the rest of the forum, updated and submitted their existing transport paper.

Trudy asked if the Highland Council planned to do an update event following the charrettes. Gail stated that the consultants would be putting out their final brief at the end of March, with a follow-up forum. Eann Sinclair noted that this was expected to take place sometime in May. Mark Norton enquired if the final version would be circulated. Trudy confirmed that it would.

- 3.4 **CTF(2012)M001/A004** – *Iain Moncrieff to deliver update on proposed Halkirk / Westerdale bridge works at next meeting* – Complete. Works on the Westerdale bridge have been deferred, works on the Halkirk bridge are expected to take 1-2 days and will not impact traffic as much as

expected. The Halkirk works are expected to cost £30,000 - £40,000 and will likely take place in 2014-15.

3.5 **CTF(2012)M001/A005** – Chamber to find contact at BEAR Scotland and invite to next meeting – Ongoing. David Swanson made contact with BEAR, but received no response. Trudy asked Cathel Macaskill if he had any information. Cathel stated that he was not sure at this time – the changeover of operating companies would take place on April 1st and the earliest this was likely to be known is March 15th. Trudy asked Cathel to keep in touch over the next few weeks on this matter

CTF(2013)M001/A002 – Cathel Macaskill to keep Chamber updated regarding details of BEAR Scotland changeover

Cathel stated that in the last two weeks of their contract, there would be a £50K spend on areas of the Berriedale Braes that have been identified as needing work.

3.6 **CTF(2012)M001/A006** – Attendees to cascade information on Kessock Bridge works to members / contacts – Complete.

3.7 **CTF(2012)M001/A007** – Chamber to contact new Transport Scotland area manager and invite to next meeting – Ongoing. No contact details received as yet.

3.8 **CTF(2012)M001/A008** – Chamber to feed back to Cathel Macaskill with regards to breaking up of Causewaymire – See Section 5.

3.9 **CTF(2012)M001/A009** – Trudy Morris to follow up with Andy Anderson on Transport Scotland update – Complete. Cathel noted that Andy Anderson is no longer in that post and that Jonathan Moran has taken over his role. Trudy asked Cathel to forward contact details for Jonathan.

3.10 **CTF(2012)M001/A010** – David Swanson to contact Marian Barbour at Serco NorthLink with regards to appropriate contact for CTF – Complete. Serco NorthLink attendees present.

3.11 **CTF(2012)M001/A011** – June Love to contact NDA with regards temporary storage for archives – Complete. The responsibility for the archives belongs to DSRL and they see no need at this stage for temporary storage.

3.12 **CTF(2012)M001/A012** – Chamber to contact DRS for an update including information regarding traffic calming measures – Complete. Anna MacConnell delivered a brief update on this – Joanne Seath at Transport Scotland is dealing with this. DRS will pay for the study, which will make recommendations on the safety measures required at Georgemas.

3.13 **CTF(2012)M001/A013** – Chamber to get update from First ScotRail on level crossing barriers – Complete. While no information was received from First ScotRail, it has been confirmed elsewhere that this will be going ahead in 2014.

Mark Norton commented that this is more a Network Rail issue, but that they are facing financial constraints.

CTF(2013)M001/A003 – Chamber to contact Network Rail for an update on level crossing barriers

Mark also mentioned that he had cause to contact Network Rail recently regarding faulty lights at the Watten crossing – they will be sending engineers to look at this.

3.14 **CTF(2012)M001/A014** – David Swanson to go through Transport Forum materials passed to Chamber from Caithness Partnership to find Terms of Reference. If none exist, discuss at next meeting with regards to this – Ongoing. None found in the files. Eann Sinclair stated he was not aware of the existence of any Terms of Reference. Anna MacConnell and June Love said they thought that Terms of Reference do exist. Trudy said the Chamber would have another look, but suggested that the Terms of Reference should be updated anyway.

CTF(2013)M001/A004 – Chamber to work with Eann Sinclair on Terms of Reference and circulate before next meeting

4. Berriedale Braes

Material relating to the Berriedale Braes was covered in the actions above.

5. Transport Updates

The Wick John O’Groats Airport update was moved up in the agenda to allow airport and HIAL attendees to leave in time to attend a medal ceremony at the airport.

5.1 Air – Wick John O’Groats Airport

A copy of the latest airport statistics is attached (HIAL Statistics January 2013).

William Sutherland delivered an update on behalf of Wick John O’Groats Airport.

Wick John O’Groats Airport has recently secured business with Chevron for the transport of offshore workers and is in discussion with several other oil and gas companies. William noted that this business came to the airport through chance but that they have worked hard to accommodate Chevron. He added that he has signed confidentiality clauses with two renewables companies.

Recruitment at the airport is ongoing – they have recently filled or are in the process of filling a number of posts. The airport has had an enquiry from Bond Helicopters regarding storage of EC-225s. The terminal building now has TV and wi-fi.

Gordon Doull asked whether the storage of EC-225s was temporary. William confirmed, noting that a crew would be coming with the helicopters but that they would not be flying.

Trudy Morris noted that a press release would be going out from the Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee, highlighting the recent good news from the airport.

Eann Sinclair noted that there is still a perception that nothing is happening at the airport.

5.2 Roads – Highland Council TECS

Iain Moncrieff delivered an update from Highland Council TEC Services.

They are finalising their maintenance programme. On the strategic level, the next issue is Killimster Moss (B876). Work on this is likely to take place next year.

Trudy Morris asked if the work will be to resurface the route. Iain stated that the issue is more structural. The road is built on between 2-4 metres of peat and was built on concrete rafts – when HGVs run over it, it causes flexing and joint failure. This causes cracks, which are then made worse when water gets into them and freezes / thaws, making the problem worse. The road was worked on in 1999-2000, with the expectation that this would last around 5 years – it has done much better than expected, but they are now at the point where something needs to be done. Iain emphasised that a realistic approach needs to be taken – the road is always going to have problems.

Trudy asked how many HGVs use the road. Iain said that he doesn't have the data to hand.

Iain stated that he believes there are two main things to consider – stiffer, thinner roads and working to reduce the problems caused by the movement of the rafts.

Mark Norton asked if there is a weight restriction on the road. Iain answered that there is not currently any such restriction and that this is a possible solution, but that imposing a weight restriction would impact on business and that one of the reasons they want to improve the road is to improve commerce.

Peter Body asked if Subsea 7 would be affected by any weight restriction and if they move large loads along the road. Iain said he was not sure. Peter and Trudy noted that there are big changes to the Subsea 7 site, leading to the possibility of more traffic.

CTF(2013)M001/A005 – *Chamber to liaise with Subsea 7 regarding projected usage of B876*

John Green said there would be a strong reaction to restriction of HGV traffic. Iain stated that nothing is ruled in or out at this stage.

Gordon Doull noted that future business could also be an issue – the upcoming cabling and substation work will involve very heavy loads. Iain said there would probably be a restriction on transporting abnormally heavy loads.

Cyril Annal asked what the cost of a permanent fix would be. Iain said he thought it would be in the region of £1 million. Cyril noted that incremental costs of short-term repairs can mount up, and that there is a need to think long-term. Iain agreed but stated that the money is not available.

There was some discussion of the benefits of long-term planning, and Cyril asked if the Highland Council had a “spend to save” fund. Iain stated that while there is benefit to long-term thinking, his department has no authority to overspend on their budget. Trudy added that the situation is a little different to Orkney, as Caithness has to compete with the rest of the Highland region.

Mark asked if there was an alternative route that could be upgraded instead. Iain reiterated that all options are open and that nothing is set in stone at the moment. He further added that it would be at least next year – probably several years beyond that – before work starts.

Peter stated that one of the issues is that the route is a B-road and therefore its importance to the movement of traffic is not correctly perceived outwith the county. He asked if there was any way to raise funds to commission a study to find out the actual commercial requirements of the road.

Trudy asked if this was included in the HITRANS study. Eann replied that HITRANS commissioned an internal transport study 12 months ago, looking at transport corridors related to future business opportunities. He thought there would be a window of opportunity to look at upgrading the road given the current and upcoming business.

It was agreed that the HITRANS study should be looked at to see what information is given regarding the B876 and to approach HITRANS to see if there is a possibility of drawing out more information.

CTF(2013)M001/A006 – *David Swanson to read and extract appropriate information from HITRANS study, contact HITRANS regarding possibility of more detailed information on B876*

John Green asked whether the upgrade of the Keiss road – programmed for 2012/13 – will be going ahead shortly. Iain said he believed this to be the case.

5.3 Roads – Scotland TranServ

Cathel Macaskill delivered a brief update from Scotland TranServ. He said there was not much to report other than that they may be moving the A99 Forss improvements forward into next year. He hoped to have more to report at the next meeting. He noted that things will be delayed given the upcoming changeover.

Trudy Morris raised the issue of the Causewaymire breaking up badly in several areas. Cathel said he would take that on board.

Cathel stated that the Kessock Bridge works are now in their 4th week and that it appears that the upgrades and refurbishments are just in time. Trudy asked what the purpose of the dedicated HGV / bus lane is, given that HGVs and buses still have to merge into traffic over the bridge. Steve Walker said it allows them to skip larger tailbacks and reduces journey time disruption. Cathel concurred and added that it also helps with transport of fragile cargoes and assists emergency services.

Trudy then raised the issue of whether cutbacks are affecting Scotland TranServ's gritting policy, noting that Caithness was badly hit during a recent spate of bad weather. While travelling up from Aviemore, she encountered several incidents on the roads within Caithness. It appeared that the roads had not been cleared or gritted, and a number of HGVs were stuck. The police had been out for so long that the batteries on their radios had died. Given that the bad weather had been forecast, she asked how this could happen.

Cathel stated that there have been no cutbacks on winter clearing and suggested that it would be good before the coming winter to have the winter service managers give a demonstration on how

winter is managed. He added that they are constrained by a matrix – given forecast X, they have to take action Y. He assured the forum that the service was delivered in accordance with this matrix.

Mark Norton noted that the road between Tore and Inverness is rutted and asked if there were any plans to deal with this. Cathel said that Scotland Transerv have safety inspectors out, but that they are restricted by categories.

Christine Dodd returned to the issue of gritting policy, asking if Scotland Transerv use local contractors for information and where they get their forecasts from. Cathel said they do use local contractors in some cases, but this information is not included in their matrix – they get their forecast from the Met Office.

Trudy noted that these forecasts are not always accurate. Iain Moncrieff noted that gritting is not always effective – the type of snow can affect it. Trudy stated that she used to see pairs of gritters constantly ploughing, but now rarely sees even one, and asked if the Forum could get an idea of Scotland Transerv's winter programme. It was agreed that this would be given at the next meeting in Wick.

CTF(2013)M001/A007 – Chamber to follow up with Cathel Macaskill on organisation of winter management presentation at autumn CTF meeting

There was some further discussion of the Kessock Bridge works. Trudy noted that things were better than anticipated. Cathel agreed, saying that the danger is ebb-and-flow from public transport and that it is important to get the balance right.

6.1 Sea – Wick Harbour Authority

Gordon Doull delivered a written update from Wick Harbour Authority (Appendix 1) – there was general agreement that it was good news for both the harbour and Wick itself.

Mark Norton asked if there was a role for rail in the plans for Wick Harbour. Gordon stated that Highland Council had put out a call for sites which mentioned two sites at Wick station and that there is potential there for rail to be used if either of these sites could be utilised. Mark noted that there are a number of unused sidings at Wick. Gordon noted that Subsea 7 take their larger shipments by rail to Georgemas.

Gordon noted that they have had issues with the John O'Groat Journal regarding recent stories about offshore wind farms – in particular with misleading headlines. There was general agreement that a number of organisations present have had similar issues.

6.2 Sea – Scrabster Harbour

A written update from Scrabster Harbour can be found at Appendix 2.

6.2 Sea – Serco NorthLink Ferries

James Linklater thanked the Forum for inviting them to participate and gave a brief update on the takeover of NorthLink Ferries by Serco. Until December, they were still in the transitional phase, but

development is progressing in the new year. They have recently undertaken vessel refurbishments and a refresh of the brand. They are engaged with VisitScotland, VisitOrkney and VisitShetland on brand awareness and awareness of the island destinations. They have a new logo – Magnus the Viking – and are working closely with VisitScotland to try and promote the idea of the islands as the “Nordic destinations”. They have been engaged in getting feedback from local communities – they have had a mixed reaction.

Trudy Morris asked if they have been getting feedback from Caithness. James confirmed this, adding that they have been getting feedback wherever they can – they have customer service questionnaires on vessels, in ports, etc. – and will be running “Meet the Manager” sessions.

Trudy asked if passenger numbers were available. Kris Bevan said they could provide the data. He added that regarding the recent strike action, they feel they have entered into a good dialogue and hope there will be no more issues.

Trudy asked if they have had any issues with the new timetable. James said they have had plenty of feedback. The timetable set out by Serco in their bid was based on statistics provided. They held consultations last year and amended some of the off-peak sailings based on feedback. However, they will be monitoring passenger numbers and reviewing things at the end of this year.

Trudy asked what feedback they have had from businesses. Kris said the main issue has been freight, which is why they have kept the early morning sailings. He added that they are happy to take business concerns on board.

James added that they are trying to work with local providers such as Pentland Ferries to ensure there is sufficient capacity when service disruptions are possible.

Alex Macmanus said he was happy to see that the photographic ID requirement had been dropped. James noted that there was no legal requirement for photo ID, but that it had assisted in the production of manifests.

Anna MacConnell said that Tom Curry from Direct Rail Services had met and discussed freight issues with Kris.

7.1 Bus - Stagecoach

Steve Walker noted that the summer timetable will be reinstated from 1st April 2013.

Trudy Morris raised the issue of disparity in southbound vs. northbound coaches – a concern had been raised that this could cause issues for anyone travelling north to Caithness General. Steve stated that there are the same number of journeys in each direction, and that they have studied in which direction people are travelling. Very few people are interested in travelling north early in the day – most want to go south early and north late.

John Green raised the issue of spaces being reserved for school children from Dornoch, noting that there have been complaints about this. Steve said that they would encourage all passengers to book and that the headmaster at Dornoch provides information daily on how many pupils will be travelling. John said he still doesn't see the need to reserve seats for the pupils. Steve said that

where they know other passengers will be getting off in Tain or Dornoch, they do not reserve those seats.

Trudy noted that a Caithness Bus Users Group (CBUG) meeting should be set up and agreed that the Chamber would liaise with Stagecoach on this.

CTF(2013)M001/A008 – *Chamber to liaise with Stagecoach regarding Caithness Bus Users Group*

8.1 Rail – Direct Rail Services

Anna MacConnell delivered an update on behalf of Tom Curry from DRS. He has been liaising with Scottish Gas Networks and they will be running a trial cargo Inverness – Bristol. He has been looking at options to base DRS-owned wagons at Inverness to serve the Far North Line. Finally, she noted that he is in the area regularly should attendees wish to schedule meetings with him.

Mark Norton gave a brief update on behalf of DORLAG. They will be having a committee meeting later this month – they will be progressing a campaign to try and get some journey time reductions on the Far North Line.

8.2 Rail – First ScotRail

A written update was received from John Yellowlees on behalf of First ScotRail (Appendix 3).

There was some brief discussion of the update, and it was agreed that the Chamber and DORLAG should push for a more substantial report from ScotRail.

CTF(2013)M001/A009 – *Chamber and Mark Norton to liaise with John Yellowlees regarding First ScotRail updates*

Mark Norton raised the recent re-opening of the Conon Bridge station, noting that it had led to a very slight increase in journey time and that he would be seeking clarification from ScotRail on this.

Kris Bevan asked if he was correct in thinking that the First ScotRail franchise was up for tender in the near future. Mark confirmed this and Trudy stated that the Forum will be seeking more detailed information and looking to have an input on this process. It was agreed that the Chamber and Mark would work together on this.

CTF(2013)M001/A010 – *Chamber to work with Mark Norton to input on First ScotRail franchising process*

9. HITRANS

Trudy Morris noted that no HITRANS representative was present and that no update was received. She further noted that she appreciates everyone taking the time to attend, but that written updates would be greatly appreciated in the event of non-attendance.

10. Any Other Business

No other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 7th June 2013 at 10:30am at the Naver Business Centre in Thurso. The following meeting will be held on Friday 25th September in Wick, venue TBC.

11. Actions on-going from previous meetings

CTF(2012)M001/A005 – *Chamber to find contact at BEAR Scotland and invite to next meeting* – David Swanson made contact with BEAR, but received no response. Trudy asked Cathel Macaskill if he had any information. Cathel stated that he was not sure at this time – the changeover of operating companies would take place on April 1st and the earliest this was likely to be known is March 15th. Trudy asked Cathel to keep in touch over the next few weeks on this matter (**CTF(2013)M001/A002**).

CTF(2012)M001/A007 – *Chamber to contact new Transport Scotland area manager and invite to next meeting* – No contact details received as yet

CTF(2012)M001/A014 – *David Swanson to go through Transport Forum materials passed to Chamber from Caithness Partnership to find Terms of Reference. If none exist, discuss at next meeting with regards to this* - None found in the files. Eann Sinclair stated he was not aware of the existence of any Terms of Reference. Anna MacConnell and June Love said they thought that Terms of Reference do exist. Trudy said the Chamber would have another look, but suggested that the Terms of Reference should be updated anyway. (**CTF(2013)M001/A004**)

Actions arising from this meeting

CTF(2013)M001/A001 – Gail Ross to feed back to Scottish Government regarding shovel-readiness of Berriedale Braes

CTF(2013)M001/A002 – Cathel Macaskill to keep Chamber updated regarding details of BEAR Scotland changeover

CTF(2013)M001/A003 – Chamber to contact Network Rail for an update on level crossing barriers

CTF(2013)M001/A004 – Chamber to work with Eann Sinclair on Terms of Reference and circulate before next meeting

CTF(2013)M001/A005 – Chamber to liaise with Subsea 7 regarding projected usage of B876

CTF(2013)M001/A006 – David Swanson to read and extract appropriate information from HITRANS study, contact HITRANS regarding possibility of more detailed information on B876

CTF(2013)M001/A007 – Chamber to follow up with Cathel Macaskill on organisation of winter management presentation at autumn CTF meeting

CTF(2013)M001/A008 – Chamber to liaise with Stagecoach regarding Caithness Bus Users Group

CTF(2013)M001/A009 – Chamber and Mark Norton to liaise with John Yellowlees regarding First ScotRail updates

CTF(2013)M001/A010 – Chamber to work with Mark Norton to input on First ScotRail franchising process

DRAFT

Appendix 1 – Wick Harbour Report for CTF 8th March 2013

Fishing: Activity continues as normal, with all landings consigned south by road. For information, local vessels land just short of £1m of whitefish and shellfish annually.

Cargoes: Imported cargoes of coal, lime, road salt, steel pipe, fertiliser, are expected to continue as normal, with 37 ships having discharged in approx 65,000 tonnes during 2012.

Onshore Wind Turbines: Since late September 13 ships have discharged 30 turbines for Camster (25) and Wathegar (5). Origins of these have been Denmark, Germany, and Spain, with one shipload coming direct to Wick from China. These have been transported through Wick via Station Rd and Argyll Sq, by two different companies.

Further shipments are expected later this year for Stroupster, Lyth, and Burn of Whilk.

Oil Related: Recent activity at Subsea7 is reflected in increased imports of steel pipe and towheads, and shipping movements. Confirmed contracts through 2013/14 should continue this activity.

Marina: Little activity over the winter season but all the sixty permanent berths for locals have now been taken up, and we have a small waiting list for 2013. We are looking at installing extra berthing fingers to ease the situation. New showers and toilets are currently under construction for completion at the end of April, ready for the new season.

Infrastructure: After the major storm on 15th December, the Harbour, along with many other east coast ports, suffered damage in several areas estimated at £0.5m. This is spread over several small but significant areas of damage. The Scottish Government has released £0.25m to us for the first tranche of repairs, and our Engineers are working on this to have it spent by 31st March this year.

Future infrastructure: We are currently progressing design work and tenders for a new £0.5m 'Heavy Lift' pad on Commercial Quay 1 in the River Basin to augment our existing pad on the North River Pier, and construction is planned for summer 2013. This is required for future heavy plant imports, and because the town bridges limit movement of long/heavy loads.

Potential Business: We are working closely with the developers of the Beatrice Offshore and Moray Offshore Windfarms, both currently expecting Planning Consent in Autumn 2013, with construction programmed for 2015. No commitments have been made, but due to our proximity to both sites we hope to be considered as an Operations and Maintenance Base (O&M), which would entail major quayside offices, stores, etc, along with berthing and welfare requirements for perhaps a dozen or more crew transfer vessels. A significant number of jobs could be created for skippers, service technicians, and onshore admin staff. A major part of our sales pitch is our communications links, especially the Airport, the A9 / A99, and high speed broadband, so it is crucial that planned improvements proceed as fast as possible.

Future Plans: The business case for potential breakwater options, deep water berths and laydown areas, to expand the Harbour into Wick Bay, is currently in progress. This would be a major investment, and would cater for renewables construction, larger cargo vessels, oil and gas servicing, and offshore decommissioning. Renewables O&M can be done from our current facilities, but this would open up opportunities for larger construction vessels.

Gordon Doull, Vice Chairman, WHA.

March 2013

Appendix 2 - Scrabster Harbour Trust Update for CTF 8th March 2013

- 1. Ferry** – Serco Northlink began their revised timetable of two sailing per day with effect from the beginning of January 2013. To date there has been no major effect on traffic volumes.
- 2. Fishing** – Fishing activity at lower level compared to previous years for the first nine months of 2012-13 although there has been a recovery in activity levels since January. The industry continues to face significant challenges including:
 - The introduction of the EC Directive on the weighing of catches
 - How the abolition of discards will be implemented
 - Reduction in sulphur emissions
- 3. Cruise** - Ten vessels are booked for the 2013 season bring 3,000 passengers to the area. Full details are available from the Trust's website.

The Trust will again exhibit, as part of Cruise Scotland, as the Seatrade Miami next week. The Trust is grateful to the Chamber of Commerce for preparing a cruise brochure for the event, and to DSRL for funding the work.

Recent changes in the immigration controls applied by the UK Border Force threaten to make the UK less attractive to the cruise lines. Despite low immigration threat and a longstanding system based on cruise passenger list checks, the UK Border Force have moved to undertaking full checks for Cruise visitors including a complete "Face to Document" regime, with no room for any discretion. This means UK Border Force officials being present to undertake checks of every passenger on the first UK port of arrival when the cruise vessel arrives from a foreign port.

There are several disadvantages to the policy approach.

- a. Additional cost** - The costs of these checks has to be borne by the cruise ship with currently no set rate or cap on the charges.
- b. Time** – The control checks are potentially time consuming and unworkable restricting the time available to offer excursions further reducing the income to the cruise lines.
- c. Uneven playing field** - Ports in remote areas may be particularly affected by the checks. It should be relatively easy and cheap to send an immigration officer along to Leith or Greenock but more expensive to send officers to Scrabster, Stornoway or Lerwick.

The Trust through its membership of Cruise Scotland has lobbied for a more proportionate approach to be taken.

- 4. Energy related traffic** – In common with previous year Oil and Gas activity has been quieter over the winter months. The port has completed the shipment of the onshore wind equipment for Baillie and Bettyhill Wind farms, and has enquiries for future shipments. We continue to be in regular dialogue with developers and the public agencies regarding accommodating marine renewable activity.
- 5. Other Trade** – General cargo trade continues to have another very strong year particularly timber shipments, but other products including fertilizer, salt and aggregates have been handled through the port.

5TH March 2013

Appendix 3 – Written update from First ScotRail for CTF 8th March 2013

Email from John Yellowlees:

I have advised a member of the public who asked about adopting Thurso Station that we regret that there is no accommodation surplus to our requirements. However, working with the staff member in the booking office, he would be welcome to brighten the station by undertaking gardening, sending his receipts to me for our prompt reimbursement, and by devising artwork for posters.

I posted to him the gardening advice from our website, and wondered if he might complete and return the questionnaire so as to indicate the scope of gardening that he would be able to undertake. I advised that for posters he should send the artwork on a cdrom to Billy Lang at RR Donnelley, 8 South Gyle Crescent Lane Edinburgh EH12 9EG tel : 0203 047 5019 – there might be an opportunity here to involve local schools?