



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 04/12/2015

Time: 10:00am

Location: T3UK, Janetstown

Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Minute Secretary)
Billy Manson	Association of Caithness Community Councils
Ian Stewart	BEAR Scotland (teleconference)
Tom Walker	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
Peter Body	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
Eann Sinclair	Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
Ken Nicol	Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd
Derrick Milnes	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
Christine Dodd	Highland Council
Cllr Gail Ross	Highland Council
Cllr Gillian Coghill	Highland Council
Cllr Roger Saxon	Highland Council
Cllr Willie Mackay	Highland Council
Mark Norton	North Rail Line Action Group
Iain Wilson	ScotRail Alliance
Rhoda Grant MSP	Scottish Parliament
James Linklater	Serco NorthLink Ferries

Steve Walker	Stagecoach North Scotland
Karl Rosie	UK Parliament
Paul Monaghan MP	UK Parliament
William Sutherland	Wick John O'Groats Airport

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:

David Flear	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Cllr Matthew Reiss	Highland Council
Cllr Neil MacDonald	Highland Council
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 04.09.2015

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

3. Review of actions from last meeting

3.1 **CTF(2015)M002/A015** – *James Linklater to feed back information, when available, on arrangements for 2016 dry docking. Complete*

James Linklater confirmed that the *MV Isle of Lewis* would be covering the *MV Hamnavoe* during the dry dock period. He noted that the *Hamnavoe* is currently scheduled to go into dry dock on 29th February 2016 and should be back in service by 16th March 2016.

Trudy Morris asked whether the *Isle of Lewis* is bigger than the *Hamnavoe* – it was confirmed that the *Isle of Lewis*, while not providing the full level of service or range of onboard facilities of the *Hamnavoe*, would be adequate to cover the dry-dock period. It was further noted that passenger boarding and disembarkation would be dealt with by way of a bespoke transfer arrangement and that adjustments would be required to berthing facilities, and that these matters are in hand.

Trudy noted that this is an excellent outcome and a good show of partnership working.

3.2 **CTF(2015)M003/A001** – *Iain Wilson to provide details of Wick vacancy to David Swanson for circulation. Complete*

Trudy confirmed that this had been actioned.

3.3 **CTF(2015)M003/A002** – *Iain Wilson to look at contingency measures if no trolley service available on Wick-Inverness route. Complete*

Trudy Morris read out a written update provided by Iain Wilson (Appendix A).

David Swanson noted that he had discussed this with Rob Shorthouse at ScotRail and noted that ScotRail are keen to work with local suppliers for catering – David will be following this up with Rob.

Iain Wilson clarified that, with regards to stocking trains at stations, they could also be stocked at main starting stations such as Inverness.

Mike Lunan noted that on-train staff used to provide hot water for drinks in situations where a trolley service was not available, and enquired as to whether this could be done again – Iain agreed to look into this

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

3.4 **CTF(2015)M003/A003** – *Chamber and Councillors to take up issues with large vehicles speeding through Reay with Iain Moncrieff. Complete*

Iain Moncrieff provided an update on this matter (Appendix B).

Trudy Morris noted that the issue is more with the speed limit in Reay, which is currently 40mph. Gillian Coghill noted that this had been discussed at Reay Community Council and that they would prefer a speed limit of 30mph.

It was agreed that the Chamber would write to William Gilfillan at Highland Council on this matter, and that the Councillors present should also take this matter up.

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

3.5 **CTF(2015)M003/A004** – *Iain Wilson to find out about possible performance targets for journey time reduction in ScotRail franchise agreement. Complete*

Iain Wilson delivered a written update on this matter (Appendix A).

David Swanson asked Iain to clarify the point regarding Rural Services JTM reduction. Iain explained that this reduction is to occur across all rural services, not on specific routes.

Mark Norton asked whether this meant that if there was a significant journey time reduction on, for example, the Glasgow – Stranraer route, this could cover that action by bringing the average down.

Iain noted that this is the case, but emphasised that this does not mean the Far North Line would not see any journey time reductions.

Mark noted that he had been in contact with the Head of Rail Policy at Transport Scotland and that he understood work was ongoing on journey time reductions on the Far North Line. Iain confirmed this, and noted that he had updated the Forum on this previously.

Paul Monaghan noted that he had recently met with the Managing Director of Network Rail, and emphasised that journey time reduction on the Far North Line may be achieved through a number of small improvements.

Trudy enquired as to whether there was any action for the Managing Director to come back on this – Paul noted that they would be discussing this matter again.

Iain Wilson noted that Network Rail are working on a number of improvements to the line, but that these may only lead to small decreases in journey time.

3.6 **CTF(2015)M003/A005** – *Mike Lunan and Mark Norton to discuss possibility of a Far North Line CRP and report back findings. Complete*

Mike Lunan and Mark Norton provided a written update on this (Appendix D), and it was agreed to defer discussion on this until later in the meeting (see 5.1 The ScotRail Alliance).

3.7 **CTF(2015)M003/A006** – *Chamber to get update from DRS on progress of developments at Georgemas. Complete*

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

3.8 **CTF(2015)M003/A007** – *Gail Ross to investigate issues with objection at Berriedale and look at how to resolve. Complete*

Gail Ross noted that she had spoken to Derek Mackay MSP with regards to this – she noted that Transport Scotland tried everything to deal with the objection, and emphasised that Berriedale is still a priority for them.

Gail further noted that she had discussed the objection with Andy Anderson at Transport Scotland, and that it related to a dispute over vehicular access to a property. She noted that

a pre-meeting was held recently to set the date for the PLI – this is expected to be in January. The feeling is that the inquiry will not take 18 months and is likely to be resolved quickly.

Trudy noted that the Scottish Government is due to deliver its draft budget shortly, and asked whether there was any indication that funding had been committed. Gail noted that she was not sure at this time.

- 3.9 **CTF(2015)M003/A008** – *Willie Mackay to take up lack of progress on Keiss development with Iain Moncrieff. Complete*

Willie noted that this matter had been discussed at a joint ward business meeting, that work had commenced and was due to be completed by spring 2016. He noted that there had already been some good improvements on this stretch of road

- 3.10 **CTF(2015)M003/A009** – *Steve Walker to provide passenger stats for 76 and 13:30 / 16:40 / 17:40 X99 services. Complete*

Trudy noted that this had been done and would be covered later in the agenda as the situation has changed since the last meeting (see 5.6 Stagecoach)

- 3.11 **CTF(2015)M003/A010** – *Chamber to put together survey seeking passenger preferences on 16:40 vs. 17:40 X99 service. Complete*

Trudy confirmed that this had been actioned. David Swanson noted that the survey came out roughly 75% in favour of keeping the 17:40 service

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

Trudy noted that this action was still ongoing.

- 3.13 **CTF(2015)M003/A012** – *Steve Walker to liaise with Highland Council on possible running of limited 76 service. Complete*

Trudy noted that this had been done and would be covered later in the agenda as the situation has changed since the last meeting (see 5.6 Stagecoach)

4. BEAR Scotland (Conference Call)

- 4.1 A conference call was held with Ian Stewart, who delivered an update on behalf of BEAR Scotland.

Works currently ongoing / completed:

- Bollards have been installed in Brora to prevent parking on footways
- Ditching works have been carried out at Lybster
- They are looking at traffic signal timings on the A99-A882 junction
- Signing works have been carried out on the Latheron-Wick route

Future works planned:

- Road lighting improvements for Helmsdale & Thurso – conversion to LED lighting
- The A9 Latheron-Wick route review will continue
- Expansion joints and electrical improvements are planned for the Dornoch Bridge

- 4.2 With regards to the patching programme, Ian noted that there are funding issues here which need to be resolved before this can be finalized.
- 4.3 Trudy Morris noted that issues had been raised with regards to the A9 South of Berriedale, with regards to landslides and a number of potholes which had been flagged for patching but had not been dealt with – Ian agreed to find out what progress had been made on these. He noted that potholes having been sprayed did not necessarily mean they were in need of imminent repair – Trudy felt that in this case, swift repair was needed.

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

- 4.4 Gail Ross noted an issue with temporary road surface and ramp signs that had been in place for some months – she noted her understanding that funding had run out for this work and her hope it would be completed within the next financial year. Ian confirmed that funding was the issue here.
- 4.5 Willie Mackay noted his congratulations on the quality of repair works carried out by BEAR.
- 4.6 Mike Lunan asked whether a timetable is in place for the Dornoch Bridge works – Ian noted that there is not at present.
- 4.7 Trudy Morris enquired as to the schedule for works in the new financial year – Ian noted that this is fluid until April 2016, but that he would issue the schedule to the Forum once this has been finalized
- 4.8 Willie Mackay noted that work was currently underway on the A9-A882 junction, as mentioned in BEAR's last report to the Forum.
- 4.9 Roger Saxon raised an issue with lighting standards on Thurso Bridge and Sir George's Street in Thurso, noting that the Council had recently been told by Police Scotland that the lighting near Skinandi's was not good enough to allow them to recognise faces from CCTV footage. He enquired as to whether this was due to be upgraded – Ian agreed to take this back to BEAR's road lighting team.

5. Matters Arising

- 5.1 There were no matters arising

6. Transport Updates

6.1 The ScotRail Alliance

- 6.1.1 Mike Lunan presented a paper on behalf of Friends of the Far North Line (FoFNL) and the North Rail Line Action Group (NoRLAG) with regards to action **CTF(2015)M003/A005**. (Appendix D)
- 6.1.2 Mark Norton reiterated that he has seen examples of existing Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and that he feels the level of commitment required is beyond FoFNL and NoRLAG. He noted that they do not oppose the creation of a CRP, they just do not have time to commit to one.
- 6.1.3 Trudy Morris felt that there was a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the ScotRail Alliance's proposed rail forums (see previous minutes). Iain Wilson noted that these are still a work in progress – the plans are to extend one of the ScotRail Alliance's four meetings with each Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) to include other rail stakeholders. The dates, venues, attendance, etc. need to be arranged with each individual RTP.
- 6.1.4 Trudy queried what the timescale is for these forums to be set up – Iain noted that this has not yet been decided, but that the aim is to have at least one before April 2016.
- 6.1.5 Mark Norton queried whether these meetings had a clear terms of reference. Iain noted that they will be meetings hosted by RTPs but dedicated to rail issues and that they will offer rail users, local authorities, etc. another means of engagement
- 6.1.6 Mark queried whether these will cover the whole of the Highlands – Iain noted that one would cover the HITRANS geographical area. Iain further noted that ScotRail expect to have a director-level presence at the meetings
- 6.1.7 Mark requested that there be a focus on journey time reduction and reliability on the Far North Line at these meetings – Iain noted that this would be a chance to put those issues forward.

- 6.1.8 Christine Dodd felt that action was needed to attract interest in setting up a CRP, and that commitment was needed if one is to go ahead. Trudy noted that this had been discussed before - that a proposal had been put to ScotRail for something similar to the Caithness Bus Users Group and that ScotRail had indicated they intended to capture that engagement through the forums with RTPs.
- 6.1.9 Roger Saxon noted that it was a shame FoFNL and NoRLAG could not be involved in any CRP, as they possessed the necessary expertise. He enquired as to whether there is any specification for how a CRP has to be set up. Mike Lunan noted that it is up to each individual CRP to set up a constitution, which has to be approved by ScotRail, and reiterated that if the Forum or any other group wanted to form a CRP there is nothing to stop them doing so.
- 6.1.10 Paul Monaghan enquired as to how many Rail User Groups (RUGs) exist in areas with CRPs. Mike Lunan noted that there are very few – that there are relatively few RUGs in Scotland – and that it will be interesting to see how RUGs and CRPs work together.
- 6.1.11 Paul enquired if the presence of FoFNL and NoRLAG meant that rail users in the area are fairly well represented – Mike felt this to be the case.
- 6.1.12 Gail Ross enquired if a CRP would be duplication in this case, and asked if there was an obligation for one to be set up. Mike noted that ScotRail have an obligation to help if a group wishes to set up a CRP, but that there is no obligation to set one up.
- 6.1.13 Iain Wilson noted that CRPs are another tool to allow engagement with communities.
- 6.1.14 Eann Sinclair noted the difference between RUGs and the wider rail forum ScotRail are proposing – he felt the key issue to be how issues are fed into this forum. Trudy agreed, noting the importance of rail users having some way to feed in their issues. Mark Norton noted that he is in contact with Community Councils in the area and that once a date has been set for the ScotRail forums, he can feed user concerns in.
- 6.1.15 Mark raised a question for Iain Wilson, noting that the proposed ScotRail forum would cover a large area, containing groups with many different priorities. He asked how ScotRail and the RTP proposed to resolve these differences. Iain reiterated that all the ScotRail Alliance are doing is linking up with the RTPs to create a meeting for interested parties to discuss rail issues – if individual stakeholders have specific issues they would like to discuss, it is up to them to bring these up at the meetings.
- 6.1.16 Paul Monaghan noted that the MD of Network Rail was aware of both FoFNL and NoRLAG, suggesting that there is a high-level awareness of the work the two groups do. Iain Wilson agreed, noting that ScotRail do engage regularly with both groups.

6.1.17 It was agreed that Iain Wilson should confirm when the forum is due to take place and notify the Forum

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

6.1.18 Trudy reiterated the importance of ensuring the wider community can feed in to this forum.

6.1.19 Iain Wilson made a few points with regards to the FoFNL and NoRLAG paper on CRPs:

- There will soon be 8 CRPs in Scotland, with one being set up for Strathallan
- It is incorrect to say that CRPs channel money to charities or community bodies; rather, CRPs receive funds from ScotRail to carry out agreed projects
- He acknowledged the workload involved in setting up and running a CRP and reiterated that it can offer another route for engagement.

6.1.20 Mike Lunan noted that he had received a response from Phil Verster, MD of the ScotRail Alliance, on a number of issues raised in FoFNL's recent station survey (**CTF(2015)M003-DOC001**):

- White lines at the edge of platforms will be introduced at a number of stations along the line
- The customer information monitors at Dingwall will be relocated outside the booking office
- A new help point will be introduced at Forsinard, giving one on each platform
- Brora and Tain will get new signage
- The lockers at Thurso and Wick stations will be removed and customer information systems will be installed, along with other improvements
- They will be looking for demolition of the derelict buildings at Invershin and Georgemas Junction
- The issue raised about stepping distances at various stations will be reviewed

Mike further noted that he has requested that tactile edging be installed on the platform at Tain.

6.1.21 Willie Mackay noted that he was impressed with the report circulated on Network Rail's works carried out during the recent eight day shutdown of the Far North Line, and noted that a large volume of work had been carried out.

6.1.22 Eann Sinclair raised an issue with display panels at Thurso station carrying outdated information – Iain agreed to look into this.

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

6.1.23 Trudy noted that issues had been raised with her recently from passengers who had been left stranded at Georgemas Junction – Iain noted that this sounded like a communications issue and agreed to look into it.

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

6.1.24 Gillian Coghill noted her concerns with a lack of stock proof fencing at various points along the railway and that this was an issue of concern to farmers in the area. Willie Mackay felt that Network Rail had done a lot of work on fencing – recently completing the Wick-Watten stretch – and that they should reach Gillian’s area soon.

6.1.25 Iain Wilson shared some performance figures for the Far North Line:

- PPM (last 40 days) is 70% for Inverness-Wick – Iain noted that this is down on the previous 40 days and that the reduction is mainly due to weather issues, including leaf fall on the lines
- Cancellations (last 40 days) are 2.85% for Inverness-Wick – this is an improvement on the previous figures and that this is down to changes in how the fleet is maintained

6.1.26 Mike Lunan noted his feeling, with regards to PPM, that 70% is still a poor performance, regardless of the weather – Mark Norton agreed and noted his feeling that there has been a drop in performance in the last 5-10 years. It was felt that with regards to leaf fall on the line, other areas suffer from this issue but do not have similar performance issues. Iain Wilson noted that in other areas, the lines are full of trains, which helps to keep them clear – he noted that ScotRail do send trains up the Far North Line to try to keep the line as clear as possible.

6.2 Direct Rail Services

6.2.1 A written update was provided by Direct Rail Services.

6.3 Berriedale Braes

6.3.1 Trudy noted that this had been covered under 3.8 above, but that the Chamber would continue to engage with Scottish Government on this matter.

6.4 Highland Council

- 6.4.1 Iain Moncrieff was not able to attend, but a written update was provided after the meeting (Appendix E).
- 6.4.2 Eann Sinclair noted that with regards to the B876 Killimster Moss, work was ongoing to design a scheme for this, but would likely be delayed until February or March of 2016. Trudy enquired as to why this was, and Christine Dodd agreed to find out.

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

6.5 Stagecoach

- 6.5.1 Steve Walker delivered an update on behalf of Stagecoach North Scotland. Of note:
- The changes discussed at the previous meeting have been implemented – it has been possible to keep on a limited 76 service
 - With regards to schoolchildren from Staxigoe, a temporary solution has been found, and Stagecoach hope that discussions with Highland Council will lead to a permanent solution being in place for the new year
- 6.5.2 Trudy Morris raised recent press stories regarding restrictions being placed on Stagecoach by the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland. Steve confirmed that this is the case and noted that, while their vehicle authorisation had been reduced to 180 (down from 210) they currently only require 169 to maintain their fleet in the Highlands, so there will be no impact on existing services.
- 6.5.3 Gail Ross raised an issue with a passenger being left at Dunbeath on 28th November – Steve agreed to feed this back.

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

- 6.5.4 Paul Monaghan noted his approval that the 17:40 X99 Northbound service had been retained, rather than the 16:40.
- 6.5.5 Gail Ross noted her thanks to Steve for his willingness to work with Highland Council to address issues. Trudy felt that this was a positive outcome of the issues being raised at Forum meetings, and noted that the Forum recognised the value of Stagecoach's contribution.

6.6 Scrabster Harbour Trust

- 6.6.1 A written updated was provided by Sandy Mackie on behalf of Scrabster Harbour Trust (Appendix F)

6.7 Wick Harbour Authority

6.7.1 No attendee was present and no written update was provided.

6.8 Serco NorthLink Ferries

6.8.1 James Linklater provided an update on behalf of Serco NorthLink Ferries. Of note:

- Passenger figures are down for November – this is largely due to weather-related disruption
- Passenger figures are up 4% year-to-date, and non-commercial vehicle traffic is up 6% year-to-date
- James reminded the Forum that free business listings are available on the NorthLink Ferries website

6.8.2 Eann Sinclair noted that he has spoken to some of the local businesses listed and that they are getting some interest as a result of this presence.

6.8.3 James noted that their holiday guide / what's on in the North Highlands section would be going live shortly and that he was happy to help anyone who wished to add events to this.

6.8.4 Trudy felt that there has been a real improvement thanks to NorthLink's involvement and engagement in the Forum and noted her appreciation.

6.8.5 James noted that the 2016 timetable is now live and that they have been able to add a few more days with three sailings between Scrabster and Stromness.

6.9 Wick John O'Groats Airport / HIAL

6.9.1 William Sutherland delivered an update on behalf of Wick John O'Groats Airport. Of note:

- Passenger numbers are down – this is largely due to the downturn in the oil and gas market, and scheduled passenger numbers have seen little or no change.
- Work on the apron is ongoing and it is hoped this will be completed by Christmas.
- Work on the GNS system is ongoing and on course to go live March 2016
- Work on the runway shoulders is ongoing
- He has met again with SSE with regards to the Beatrice Offshore Windfarm and hopes to have answers soon regarding e.g. hangarage
- He has had other discussions with companies which remain business sensitive, but hopes to have more to announce next year

- 6.9.2 Trudy Morris noted that the Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee (WJACC) has raised its concerns about reliability with Loganair, and enquired as to whether HIAL had done the same.
- 6.9.3 William noted that this has been an issue for HIAL – they have had incidents where extra staff have been put in place to ensure the airport is open for delayed flights, which have then been cancelled. He confirmed that HIAL are taking these issues seriously and have taken them up with Loganair.
- 6.9.4 Derrick Milnes noted that the condition of the planes can be poor, and gave an example of a recent flight he was on.
- 6.9.5 William Sutherland noted his understanding that Loganair have engineering issues which they are working to address, and that this is causing the issues with reliability and delays.
- 6.9.6 Rhoda Grant noted that MSPs have recently met with the Transport Minister with regards to issues with Loganair, and they expect an update soon.
- 6.9.7 William Sutherland noted that the worry is if people have a bad experience they won’t use the service again – there was general feeling that this is true. Trudy noted that the issue is one of perception.
- 6.9.8 Paul Monaghan noted his understanding that the Air Discount Scheme had been extended – Trudy and William confirmed this to be the case.
- 6.9.9 Mike Lunan enquired as to whether air transport providers such as Loganair could be invited to the Forum. Trudy noted that Loganair and Eastern both have commitments to attend the WJACC, and that concerns can be passed on to them via that forum (and vice versa).
- 6.9.10 Steve Walker noted that there is a wider issue with recruitment of skilled engineering staff, noting that Stagecoach have struggled with this. He felt that there could be difficulties in retaining apprentices – while they can pay more, this cost then has to be covered.
- 6.9.11 Trudy Morris noted that the Developing the Young Workforce North Highland group are looking at this issue, and that Highlands & Islands Enterprise have recently commissioned a study on talent attraction – she agreed that this is an issue for the area.
- 6.9.12 William Sutherland felt the solution is to cultivate your own staff – he noted that HIAL’s issues with recruiting ATC staff are being addressed in this fashion. Trudy noted the importance of making people aware of opportunities in the area, and of collectively working to address this issue.

7. Press Communications

- 7.1 It was felt that communications should highlight the fact that a solution is in place for the dry docking of the *MV Hamnavoe*. It was also felt that communications should highlight the positive impact of communications between Stagecoach and the Highland Council

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Mark Norton enquired as to whether Subsea 7 were likely to resume rail freight of pipes to Georgemas Junction – Trudy noted that the Chamber would take this up with Subsea 7

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

- 8.2 David Swanson noted that the Scottish Government are currently consulting on their draft rail freight strategy, and that he would circulate the consultation document shortly with a view to putting in a response on behalf of the Forum.

- 8.3 Roger Saxon noted that the Highland Council's transport consultation remains open for responses – David Swanson agreed to circulate information on this to Forum members again and asked them to forward it on to any interested parties

CTF(2015)M004/A012 – Chamber to circulate Highland Council transport consultation information again

- 8.4 Rhoda Grant asked whether these surveys were put on the buses themselves – Steve Walker confirmed that they were on some of the buses.

- 8.5 There was some discussion of the HITRANS Branchliner project, which aims to move forestry traffic on to rail – it was generally felt that this would be a positive move. David Swanson agreed to seek an update from Frank Roach at HITRANS on this project.

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

9. Date of the next meeting

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting was provisionally agreed for Friday 4th March – Trudy Morris noted that this would be preceded by a meeting of the WJACC.

10. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

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

11. Actions arising from this meeting

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

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

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

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/A007 – Iain Wilson to look into issues with outdated information at Thurso station

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

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

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

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

CTF(2015)M004/A012 – Chamber to circulate Highland Council transport consultation again

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

Appendix A – ScotRail Alliance

The Franchise Agreement (FA) includes references to the delivery of *maintaining* and *improving* on journey times.

There are commitments to improve journey time but nothing specific to a single route - excepting Edinburgh-Glasgow which includes a biggest journey time reduction of from 55 minutes to 42 minutes

The main FA references are within Schedule 7.2 - Journey Time Metric.

This metric refers to the average journey time per mile (JTM) and there is a requirement to reduce the journey time metric across all **Route** sectors. These are in summary:

Express Services

Edinburgh to Aberdeen
Edinburgh to Falkirk to Glasgow
Glasgow/Edinburgh to Inverness; Glasgow to Aberdeen

Suburban East Services (Formerly East Coast)

Edinburgh to Bathgate, Dunblane, Fife Circle, Newcraighall and North Berwick

Suburban West Services (Formerly Strathclyde and Central Groups)

All Services starting or terminating at Glasgow Central High Level
All Services via Glasgow Central Low Level
All Services via Glasgow Queen Street Low Level
Glasgow Queen Street to Falkirk Grahamston/Cumbernauld/Dunblane/Maryhill/Anniesland
Kilmarnock to Ayr/Girvan/Stranraer
Motherwell to Cumbernauld

Rural Services (Formerly South West and Highland Groups)

Glasgow to Stranraer
Glasgow/Stranraer/Girvan to Dumfries to Carlisle/Newcastle
Inverness to Aberdeen, Kyle of Lochalsh and Wick/Thurso
The West Highland Lines

The Rural Services route JTM is to be reduced from 1.513 minutes per mile to 1.509

And in terms of maintaining or improvement journey times, the final clauses of Schedule 7.2 are very clear:

- The Franchisee shall use best endeavours to ensure that the Journey Time is equal to or lower than the Journey Time Metric in each Sector in every Timetable throughout the Franchise Term.
- The Franchisee's performance against the Journey Time Metric will be a consideration of the Authority in determining whether the Authority's stated policy objectives have been delivered through the Franchise Services.

The ScotRail FA is on Transport Scotland's website. See:

www.transportscotland.gov.uk/system/files/documents/tsc-basic-pages/Redacted%20Franchise%20Agreement%20-%20CU%20version.pdf

Finally, it is worth noting:

There are Service Level Commitments (SLC) which specify maximum journey times by route - for example, Wick to Inverness is 4 hours 22 minutes. Where times cannot be met, we can seek derogation from the SLC. Info on the SLC is available on the TS website:

[www.transportscotland.gov.uk/system/files/documents/tsc-basic-pages/SCOTRAIL%20SLC%20\(final%20version\).pdf](http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/system/files/documents/tsc-basic-pages/SCOTRAIL%20SLC%20(final%20version).pdf)

In addition, the new Hitachi trains on the main Glasgow-Edinburgh line being introduced from late 2017 will reduce journey times. We're also introducing a fully refurbished fleet of High Speed Trains worthy of the seven cities of Scotland in 2017-18. They will provide a 20% increase in capacity and the potential for significant journey time improvements between cities, improved comfort and a true intercity experience which everyone told us they wanted.

Other actions from last meeting

CTF(2015)M003/A002 – *Iain Wilson to look at contingency measures if no trolley service available on Wick-Inverness route*

ScotRail hospitality employees are rostered to cover all trains to and from Wick and we endeavour to do so. In line with the rest of the network on occasion this may not happen due, for example, to a staff shortage caused by an unexpected call off (illness, for example); a train delay or disruption etc.

From a total safety and welfare perspective, we only take trolleys on and off trains at stations there are facilities and is safe to do so. We have welfare and safety risk assessments for this process

With the exception of main starting point stations, we only take trolleys on and off points such as Perth and Dundee for example and this follows the assessments, including lifts and gradients and facilities to store trolleys and for the welfare of staff.

However, we are changing suppliers in December and aim to hold adequate stock on the Far North Line from early 2016.

And finally - there is a reference in the minutes to having noted that the ScotRail Alliance is increasing train crew at all rural depots – as an interim measure at Wick they have seconded an additional crew member. Mike Lunan queried if the seconded crew member was a driver – Iain noted he would have to check this.

I can confirm the Wick secondment is a driver.

Appendix B – Traffic flow statistics for Reay

For westbound, total traffic flow is 5118 vehicles almost 9% of which are rigid goods vehicles, artics or buses, with an 85% tile speed of 38.5mph and highest recorded vehicle speed of 42.5mph. Eastbound traffic flow is given as 4825 vehicles almost 10% of which are rgv's, artics or buses, with an 85% tile speed of 39.1mph and highest recorded vehicle speed of 46.5mph

Appendix C – Direct Rail Services

Since the meeting in February the two opportunities which we were working on are yet to move into the service evaluation stage of our new business process.

The company X which we referred to were unable to commit to a rail service earlier in the year due to their customers' needs and volumes. However, recently they have re-submitted a proposal to their customer for the use of a dedicated rail freight service to Georgemas. They have advised me that they will contact me regarding this in the next couple of weeks to advise me on their requirements should the proposal be given the go ahead by their customer. If this is the case we will then progress this opportunity to the service evaluation stage of our new business process where we will re-asses the following:

- Train crew requirements
- Assets required
- Training / route learning
- Mileage
- Paths
- Terminals
- Lifts
- Set up / Activation costs

As for the work which was associated with the national nuclear archive in Wick the NDA have named Crimson as their preferred contractor to complete the document moves. We were involved in early discussions with Crimson about the use of a dedicated rail freight service to Georgemas to facilitate these document moves and again these discussions are yet to advance to the service evaluation stage.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us and we will provide updates where possible.

Appendix D – Community Rail Partnership

Mark Norton (Convener of North Line Action Group (NorLAG)) and Mike Lunnan (Convener of Friends of the Far North Line (FoFNL)) were asked to bring a paper to CTF on the subject of a possible Community Rail Partnership (CRP). This is our report.

Abellio ScotRail are required, as part of their franchise commitment, to bring into being CRPs. Each will have a budget of up to £20,000 in each of its first two years, falling to £10,000 a year "going forward". At the time of writing there are seven CRPs in Scotland, the most recent - Highland Main Line CRP - being formed earlier this month.

We have each discussed the formation and purpose of CRPs with Lindley Kirkpatrick, who attended the last CTF meeting in September. It is clear that the bulk of the work carried out by a CRP will devolve to its Board members, all being unpaid volunteers. The composition of the Lochaber CRP's committee, for example, includes members representing various tourist organisations, a community councillor, a Highland Council member, and the Lochaber Chamber of Commerce. We do not know the composition of the other Boards, but have no reason to think they will be different in bringing together a wide range of community interests.

The outcomes achievable by a CRP are no different from the outcomes being sought by Rail User Groups (RUGs) like NorLAG and FoFNL; indeed the outcomes being sought by NorLAG and FoFNL are much the same with regard to tactical line improvements. A CRP has closer formal ties to the railway industry; it has a formal structure; and it receives money directly from the railway - or, rather, it is the channel by which money is given to charities or community bodies to carry out specific projects. A CRP does not receive money without a precise purpose for its use being known.

We believe that the considerable time commitment required of Board members, particularly in the early years of a CRP, would be beyond the resources available to members of NorLAG or FoFNL. These RUGs already operate along the line of route of the Far North Line and have good links at all levels with relevant bodies within the wider rail industry. Considerable successes have already been

achieved, sometimes involving the industry in committing funds vastly in excess of the £40,000 available to a CRP in its first two years. We are therefore unclear as to how much added value the creation of a CRP, as proposed at the last CTF meeting and on the lines discussed above, would bring to existing campaigns to improve the Inverness to Caithness railway line and services thereon for the benefit of all communities along the Line.

NorLAG and FoFNL would not stand in the way of others who might wish to create a CRP, but it should be recognised that current proposals for the creation of a CRP could not be actively participated in by either Group because of existing time commitments by their members.

30 November 2015

Appendix E – Highland Council Community Services

South & East Caithness – Iain Moncrieff

- Westerdale Rd Remedial Works – tarring and patching completed, drainage works outstanding
- Noss Primary School
 - 20mph Order – due to be issued for consultation and presentation to Ward Forum Dec/Jan
 - One Way Order – order to be ‘made’ Dec/Jan
 - Traffic Calming Works – remaining outstanding works to be completed by March except for road markings which are weather dependent.
- Wick Campus
 - One way order at Seathforth Terrace – programmed start Jan 16 with completion in Oct 16
 - 20 mph Order - programmed start Jan 16 with completion in Oct 16
 - Station Rd traffic calming – island to be replaced with low rise speed table allowing access to caravan park. Consultation to take place prior to works.
- A99 Keiss Widening
 - Tarred up to cemetery
 - North end to be tarred next week
 - Works started in middle section
 - Completion by March 16
- B876 Killimster Moss
 - Topographical survey completed for Development & Infrastructure
 - Options appraisal completed for Mar 16.
- Haster Bridge – In discussion with insurance company
- Lyth Bridge – queued for resources

North Coast – Stuart Bell

- Miller Academy
 - Castlegreen Rd junction. SRTS team to prepare design. No further progress
- Thurso Disabled Parking Order – nearing completion, may incorporate Wick into the same order.
- Shore St One Way Order – traffic survey shows more traffic heading to the harbour than other way. Meeting with Thurso Cllrs to discuss reversing the proposed direction of travel
- Janet St Parking Restrictions - SRTS design team to incorporate in proposed scheme, no further progress
- Murkle Bridge Works - queued for resources
- Forss Bridge repairs to spandrel wall - queued for resources

Appendix F – Scrabster Harbour Trust



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 4th DECEMBER 2015 SCRABSTER HARBOUR UPDATE

1. TRAFFIC STATISTICS

In the period April to October 2015, there were 1,329 vessel arrivals, almost identical to the number of arrivals in the corresponding period last year.

Vessel tonnage, in the period, amounted to 5.382 million tonnes, this is 3% higher than last year.

2. FERRY

The next meeting of the Northern Isles Consultative Forum is scheduled for 21/22 December 2015.

The CalMac vessel, Isle of Lewis, will be available to cover the Scrabster- Stromness route when the Hamnavoe goes to dry-dock in March 2016. The vessel is scheduled to make a trial berthing at Scrabster on 7th December 2015 to ensure that it can be accommodated by the Scrabster linkspan.

3. FISHING

As previously reported fishing activity has fallen back in the current financial year. Box landings, for the period April to October, amounted to 164,000 boxes. The landings figure is 5% lower than last year.

However the port's shellfish returns, for April to September 2015, were 7% higher than last year.

The new landing obligations for discards comes into force on 1st January 2016. The new European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which is intended to fund new port infrastructure to accommodate the discards, is not yet open to applications.

4. OIL AND GAS

The sector continues to go through a difficult adjustment to deal with lower oil prices. This has led to a number of companies laying up vessels due to lack of work. Despite this Scrabster continues to have its best year on record for oil and gas activity.

In the period April to October 2015 the port received 71 O&G vessel arrivals with a total tonnage of 396,707. Vessel numbers and tonnage are up 38% and 81% respectively.

5. GENERAL CARGO

General cargo activity has been steady comprising timber, road salt and fish farm related cargoes. A number of transformers for the Spittal sub-station will arrive at Scrabster mid-December.

Elmship have made alterations to the sailing schedule which includes the Faroes to Scrabster route. The sailing schedule now includes port calls in Denmark, Sweden and Poland. Vessels will continue to call at Scrabster each Tuesday. The cargo tonnages, for the period April to October, amounted to over 8,000 tonnes, primarily salmon.

6. RENEWABLES

There has been limited renewable related traffic this year with the bulk of the vessels being involved in the preparatory work for MeyGen's Phase 1a development.

7. CRUISE

There are ten cruise calls (one provisional) booked for 2016, and a further seven bookings for 2017.

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