



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 13/06/2019

Time: 11:00

Location: Wick Town Hall, Wick

Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (chair)
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (minutes)
Peter Faccenda	Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
Allan Tait	Caithness Voluntary Group
Julie Marker	Caithness Voluntary Group
Roger Saxon	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
Bill Mowat	Gills Harbour
Alex Macmanus	Highland Council
Cllr Donnie Mackay	Highland Council
Cllr Matthew Reiss	Highland Council
Cllr Willie Mackay	Highland Council
Jonathan Gunn	Highland Council
Dougie Cook	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd / Wick John O'Groats Airport
Mark Stuart	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd
Julie McGee	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Frank Roach	HITRANS
Derek Glasgow	The ScotRail Alliance
Daniel Laird	Stagecoach North Scotland
David Liston	Stagecoach North Scotland
Marco Bardelli	Transport Scotland
Malcolm Bremner	Wick Harbour

1. Welcome and apologies

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

1.2 Apologies were received from:

Billy Manson	Association of Caithness Community Councils
CLlr Nicola Sinclair	Highland Council
Inglis Lyon	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd
Kathryn Scollie	Pentland Ferries
Gail Ross MSP	Scottish Parliament
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour
Kris Bevan	Serco NorthLink Ferries
Davie Alexander	Thurso & Wick Trades Union Council
Paul Linhart-MacAskill	Transport Scotland

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 03.06.2019

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting

3. Review of actions from last meeting

CTF(2018)M001/A005 - *Frank Roach to provide details of station analysis once carried out.*

ONGOING

Frank Roach noted that he would provide details of this following the meeting.

CTF(2018)M002/A001 – *David Swanson to follow up with Frank Roach at HITRANS on progress of timber transport by rail* **COMPLETE**

Frank noted that Fergus Ewing had set up a meeting with rail freight and logistics providers at Scotland House in London and that a follow-up meeting was due to be held in Perth around 2 weeks from the date of this meeting.

They are proposing a network where a train will service various customers at different times of the week. There is likely to be a requirement for lineside loading at Altnabreac.

Frank noted that there has recently been a drop in demand for timber transport but that longer term the issues and demand remains.

CTF(2018)M002/A006 – *David Swanson to speak with Highland Council to make a contact to discuss the issue of signage and access to historic monuments* **COMPLETE**

This was discussed and it was agreed that Bill would look to gather more information and take this forward.

CTF(2018)M003/A006 – Brian Gordon to feed back to Forum on RET rollout when more information available **ONGOING**

Per the Transport Scotland Ferries Unit update (**Appendix A**), this matter remains ongoing.

CTF(2019)M001/A001 – Chamber to write to HITRANS on behalf of Forum to ask for an update on bus service information provision **COMPLETE**

The Chamber wrote to HITRANS regarding this, and it was clarified that matters relating to shelter infrastructure and lack of access to provide updated information are for Highland Council to address.

The issue which originally led to this point, regarding service 77 and Gills Harbour, will be addressed in an upcoming timetable review.

This was subsequently taken up with Highland Council and Alex Macmanus was able to secure an update on Highland Council's process as follows:

We are aware of some data issues between HiTrans and Stagecoach, which from time to time may affect the accuracy of individual timetables. Our team is currently in the process of a review with HiTrans and Stagecoach with a view to resolve these issues and improve timetable publicity in general.

The operators are responsible for displaying the timetables, this is now written in the conditions of contracts which commenced in January 2017. If we are made aware of issues then we can arrange a reprint, If you have identified any stops that require to be replaced or updated please let us know and we will do our best to address.

Please bear in mind that as much as we will always try to do this in a timely manner, our team is currently under staffed due to budget constraints which may affect the length of time that it takes to resolve.

Our bus shelter cleaning contract requires that the contractor makes us aware of any damage to shelters that require attention, we can then pass this information onto the area teams. Our bus shelter cleaning contractor have also agreed to put up individual replacement timetables when it fits in with their cycle. They operate a 12 week cycle throughout the Highlands 4 times annually.

CTF(2019)M001/A002 – David Swanson to liaise with Bill Mowat and Stagecoach on bus services to Gills Harbour **COMPLETE**

Daniel Laird noted that Stagecoach would address this in their update.

CTF(2019)M001/A003 – Chamber to raise non-attendance at Forum meetings with Stagecoach **COMPLETE**

This was done – David Liston (Managing Director) and Daniel Laird (Commercial Director) were in attendance at the meeting.

CTF(2019)M001/A004 – Forum to seek update on State Aid issues from relevant Cabinet Secretary and Minister **COMPLETE**

Trudy noted that the original issue regarding Air Passenger Duty and Air Departure Tax was now moot, as Scottish Government had elected not to move forward with the devolution of this tax. With regards to RET, this remains ongoing per **Appendix A**

CTF(2019)M001/A005 – David Swanson to liaise with Roger Saxon and Transport Scotland on freight services in new Northern Isles Ferry Services contract **COMPLETE**

David discussed this with Roger and provided the relevant sections of the Invitation to Tender for information.

CTF(2019)M001/A006 – Forum to write to Paul Wheelhouse MSP for clarity on impact of legal challenge on procurement process for Northern Isles Ferry Services **COMPLETE**

This was done – a letter was sent and a response received **CTF(2019)M002/DOC001 & 002**

CTF(2019)M001/A007 – David Swanson to update Forum on Press'n'Ride demonstration event **COMPLETE**

David received a general update from David Kerr at Transport Scotland on the Far North Line Review Team on 5th June:

1. With regard to Press'n'Ride, I am still waiting for Network Rail to confirm when demonstrations will be held. I emailed for an update last week.
2. The actions from the last meeting have now been approved and should be sent out to the Far North Line Review Team this week.
3. The consolidation report has now been returned from Network Rail. That report is now subject to final review prior to issue to ministers.

Frank Roach confirmed that the Press'n'Ride demonstration unit had been tested and that attempts were being made to secure a date for demonstration to stakeholders.

CTF(2019)M001/A008 – Kenny Hurst to follow up on discarded sleepers at Altnabreac **COMPLETE**

An update on this was received from Kenny as follows:

Near the end of 2016 there was a lot of re-railing work being done through the Altnabreac area. This job left a lot of scrap materials (rails, sleepers, various fittings, etc) that would normally be left, secured, lineside and recovered at the end of the job.

With the remoteness of the site at Altnabreac the normal recovery was proving difficult to organise. Some of the materials were recovered by the company. We had received an offer from the owner of the house at Altnabreac station to uplift the remainder of the lineside scrap materials.

As well as the station house itself they also have a fair bit of land around Altnabreac station itself. This contractor has now moved all scrap assigned to them off railway land and on to their own. Despite numerous requests from NWR to tidy the site, it lies as it is.

Ultimately with the materials sitting on private land we will find it very difficult to remedy the current situation.

CTF(2019)M001/A009 – David Swanson to follow up with HITRANS on sidings at Kinbrace for timber traffic **COMPLETE**

See **CTF(2018)M002/A001**

CTF(2019)M001/A010 – David Swanson to coordinate with relevant partners on future rail / bus / ferry connectivity **ONGOING**

David noted that efforts were ongoing to coordinate an initial discussion on this matter.

CTF(2019)M001/A011 – Trudy Morris & Roger Saxon to discuss Georgemas freight trial with NDA **COMPLETE**

This was raised at the most recent Dounreay Stakeholder Group, but no subsequent update had been received from Direct Rail Services. It was agreed that Trudy and Roger would seek an update from DRS.

CTF(2019)M002/A001 – Trudy Morris & Roger Saxon to seek update from DRS on Georgemas freight trial

CTF(2019)M001/A012 – Alex Macmanus to secure update from Highland Council roads department **COMPLETE**

This was covered under Highland Council's update.

CTF(2019)M001/A013 – Cllr Nicola Sinclair to feed back to the Forum on discussions around additional roads maintenance budget **ONGOING**

This is awaiting an update from Cllr Nicola Sinclair.

CTF(2019)M001/A014 – Alex Macmanus to feed back on Traffic Regulation Orders once consultation is complete **COMPLETE**

It was confirmed that the Traffic Regulation Orders have been made and that officers are reviewing all locations to ensure signage and lining is correct. Enforcement is being rolled out during June and July.

CTF(2019)M001/A015 – Cllr Raymond Bremner to provide Marco Bardelli with details of areas of concern on A99 **COMPLETE**

Marco confirmed that this was done.

CTF(2019)M001/A016 – Forum to query Transport Scotland on feasibility of Berriedale contract timescales and any penalty clauses **COMPLETE**

An update was received from Transport Scotland confirming that the end date for works is Spring 2020, and that a contractual mechanism is in place should the contractor fail to fulfil its obligations.

It was noted that as with all complex civil engineering contracts, completion is subject to a number of external factors such as inclement weather.

CTF(2019)M001/A017 – Statistics for Wick John O'Groats Airport to be circulated to Forum once available **COMPLETE**

This was done **CTF(2019)M002/DOC003**

CTF(2019)M001/A018 – Chamber to circulate press release and Q&A on HIAL industrial action to Forum **COMPLETE**

This was done – it was confirmed that all industrial action is suspended at present while a new pay offer is considered.

CTF(2019)M001/A019 – *Chamber to invite Inglis Lyon to meet with the Forum* **ONGOING**

An invite was extended – Inglis is unavailable for June but Mark Stuart was in attendance. Inglis gave an indication of availability for September should the Forum still wish to meet with him.

It was agreed that this remained the case and an invitation for September would be extended.

CTF(2019)M001/A020 – *Chamber to feed back on discussions at Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee to Forum* **COMPLETE**

Trudy Morris fed back that discussions had been on the industrial action by ATCs, concerns over degradation in service, and the possibility of reduction of opening hours at the airport.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 Trudy Morris noted the work currently being done on the Strategic Transport Projects Review and highlighted some key priorities for the area including the A9 both North and South of Inverness, the Far North Line, and the Highland Main Line.

5. HITRANS Presentation

- 5.1 Frank Roach gave a short presentation on the Midnight Train to Georgemas (MT2G) sleeper project, and on proposals for a battery-powered Wick-Thurso shuttle

CTF(2019)M002/DOC004

- 5.2 With regards to MT2G, Frank noted that there is a small window of opportunity available to make the case to government for support, and that he would welcome local support for the project.

- 5.3 It was agreed that the Chamber would circulate Frank’s presentations to the Forum, collate any expressions of support for either project, and pass this on to him.

CTF(2019)M002/A002 – *Chamber to collate expressions of support for sleeper & battery train projects*

- 5.4 Cllr Matthew Reiss felt that Caithness councillors would generally support both projects. He noted that there is a case for MT2G both with regards to tourism and business travel. He felt that given the level of renewable energy investment in Caithness, it would be appropriate for a battery-powered train to be based in this area. Cllr Willie Mackay agreed on this point.
- 5.5 Roger Saxon noted his interest in the possibility of a Wick-Thurso shuttle and enquired whether it would lead to opportunities to open some closed stations in Caithness. Frank confirmed that this may be the case.

- 5.6 Roger noted his support for MT2G but noted that HITRANS should be mindful of local sensibilities and that Caithness not be seen purely as a stop for Orkney.
- 5.7 Trudy Morris queried whether MT2G would result in any shift in passengers from the Caledonian Sleeper – Frank noted that this was not likely.
- 5.8 Daniel Laird noted that he was interested in the economic calculations around the MT2G project, and that Citylink did previously operate sleeper coaches.

6. Transport Updates

6.1 Stagecoach North Scotland

- 5.1.1 Daniel Laird provided an update on behalf of Stagecoach. Of note:
- They are currently working with the Chamber to adjust the format of the Caithness Bus Users Group
 - They will shortly be taking feedback on the network, as discussions with Dounreay on works services have now reached a point where Stagecoach can proceed with modifications to the wider network
 - On the X99 service, they will look to build in a comfort break at Dornoch following passenger requests for this
 - There remains on resource to connect with the midday sailing at Gills Harbour
 - They have been working with Pentland Ferries on joint ticketing
- 5.1.2 Daniel agreed to provide details of proposed changes to services in Caithness once available.
- CTF(2019)M002/A003** – *Daniel Laird to provide details of proposed changes to services*
- 5.1.3 Trudy queried, following the HITRANS presentation, whether there was any scope for electric buses in the area. Daniel noted this is of interest in the medium term, and David Liston confirmed that electric vehicles are part of the wider Stagecoach group strategy.
- 5.1.4 There was some further discussion of electric vehicles, including the possibility of an electric vehicle pilot in the region, and it was agreed that Stagecoach and the Chamber would discuss this further.
- CTF(2019)M002/A004** – *Stagecoach and Chamber to discuss electric vehicle pilot*
- 5.1.5 Allan Tait noted that Caithness Rural Transport would be taking ownership of an electric vehicle for use within towns. Trudy noted that there is a need for commercial and community services to match up to fill gaps in provision. Daniel noted that Stagecoach have been looking at this aspect as part of their discussions with NHS Highland around the proposed redesign.
- 5.1.6 Cllr Willie Mackay raised local concerns around the new vehicles on the X99. Daniel noted that these were brought in to meet the capacity needs of the route. He acknowledged that the design is not ideal but that the vehicles are compliant with legislation.
- 5.1.7 David Liston noted that Stagecoach have been working with the manufacturer to see how they can address some of the issues but that there are limits to how much the vehicles can

be altered. He noted that they have been providing driver training and best practice, have installed a significant additional number of buzzers and have added additional signage. They are also looking at where it may be possible to add additional grab rails.

5.1.8 David further noted that the vehicles are more reliable and that they have had positive feedback as well as negative. He noted that there is no other vehicle type available that can match the requirements of the service.

5.1.9 It was agreed that David would provide details of alterations made to X99 vehicles for circulation.

CTF(2019)M002/A005 – *David Liston to provide details of alterations to X99 vehicles*

5.1.10 Cllr Reiss welcomed the work done by Stagecoach on the X99. He further noted that the Highland Council's chief executive is keen to explore more local projects and that he felt the use of locally generated power for local projects was a positive.

5.2 Scrabster Harbour

5.2.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix B**). Trudy Morris drew attendees' attention to the drop-in consultation event on Friday 14 June.

5.3 Wick Harbour Authority

5.3.1 Malcolm Bremner provided an update on behalf of Wick Harbour Authority. Of note:

- The Harbour Authority has been working with Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd (BOWL) which has brought significant investment and regeneration
- New businesses have started up at the harbour to service the opportunities brought by BOWL, and there will be 60+ staff based out of the refurbished Telford buildings
- SSE / BOWL have 6 pontoons and 12 service vessels at the harbour, and there will be 12-24 staff out daily to maintain the turbines – at the peak of activity there were 235 people daily working on the windfarm, and at present around 60 per day.
- ROV survey work is also ongoing, and Moray East and West windfarms are both looking to base survey vessels at Wick
- The harbour has taken delivery of pipe cargos and towheads for the Subsea 7 site at Wester, as well as a recent large shipment of agricultural lime
- Last year was the busiest ever for the marina, and there are waiting lists for this year to access berths
- Fishing and crab landings have increased in value
- The harbour has had two visits from the *MV Hebridean Princess* cruise vessel
- They have recently employed a Deputy Harbourmaster
- On the high water gate project, tenders have been returned for the civils work and they are awaiting return of tenders for the mechanical works.

5.3.2 Trudy Morris welcomed the positive news for the harbour.

- 5.3.3 Cllr Reiss noted that a large windfarm off Florida has been blocked to commercial shipping but open to sports fishing and queried what access would be available at BOWL once construction is complete. Malcolm noted that once operational, commercial vessels will be allowed access provided they do not go within 50m of the turbines.
- 5.3.4 Cllr Reiss queried whether there was an opportunity for more visits by small cruise ships. Malcolm agreed this was a possibility but noted the preference for Scrabster.
- 5.3.5 Cllr Mackay queried why the crew transfer vessels used for BOWL are of the catamaran type – Malcolm noted that these are more stable.
- 5.3.6 Cllr Mackay congratulated the historic *Isabella Fortuna* on being presented with the regional flagship accolade from National Historic Ships UK. He also drew attendees' attention to the RNLI Wick Lifeboat Day on 15 June.

5.4 Pentland Ferries

- 5.4.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix C**)

5.5 Gills Harbour

- 5.5.1 Bill Mowat presented an update on behalf of Gills Harbour (**Appendix D**)

5.6 Serco NorthLink Ferries

- 5.6.1 No attendee was present and no update was provided.
- 5.6.2 An update was provided by Transport Scotland Ferries Unit (**Appendix A**)

5.6 ScotRail Alliance

- 5.6.1 Derek Glasgow presented an update on behalf of the ScotRail Alliance. Of note:
- Reliability over the past couple of weeks has been poor – this has been mainly related to Network Rail issues but there has been one RETB and one engine failure
 - There have been issues with catering provision and he is seeking a response on this
 - Some money has been provided in CP6 for investment in the Far North Line, including a passing loop and investment at Georgemas Junction
 - He will shortly be moving roles in the business and will be covering all rail north of Perth
- 5.6.2 Derek provided a more detailed update on recent performance on the line (**Appendix E**)
- 5.6.3 It was agreed that Derek would feed back to the Forum once he had a response on catering.

CTF(2019)M002/A006 – Derek Glasgow to feed back on catering issues on Far North Line

- 5.6.4 Trudy queried Derek's thoughts on the battery train proposal. He noted his feeling that it is a good idea and that a 158 may come available to use for this purpose.
- 5.6.5 Cllr Reiss noted that he would be raising some issues regarding the rail service at the next full Council meeting.
- 5.6.6 Roger Saxon queried whether bringing in a battery train on the Wick-Thurso section of the line would require additional platforms. Derek felt that this could be avoided through timetabling.
- 5.6.7 Bill Mowat noted that a battery-driven train could be an attraction in and of itself.

5.7 Direct Rail Services

- 5.7.1 No attendee was present and no update provided.

5.8 BEAR Scotland

- 5.8.1 Marco Bardelli provided an update on behalf of BEAR Scotland / Transport Scotland. Of note:
- With regards to Berriedale, as confirmed the official end date is Spring 2020
 - There is some traffic management in place at present while BT and Scottish Water divert utilities – the longest wait time is around 4 minutes
 - Maintenance works have recently been completed at a number of locations including Hempriggs, Tain, Georgemas and Thrumster
 - Footway improvements are underway in Thurso, with improvements in Wick to start in July
 - Additional signage is being put in place for the North Coast 500 over the summer period
 - Maintenance works are scheduled in for Latheron, Latheronwheel, Dunbeath, Lothmore, and Brora over the August-September period
 - There will also be some works to renew hand markings along the A9 and A99
- 5.8.2 Trudy noted issues with works on the A9 at Brora leaving the road surface in poor condition. Marco noted that there had been issues with the contractor for Scottish Water and that works on the road surface would be redone to improve the condition.
- 5.8.3 Cllr Reiss welcomed the news on signage for the North Coast 500 and queried when this would be complete – Marco noted this was difficult to say but hoped it would be by the end of August.
- 5.8.4 Cllr Mackay noted that he was pleased with the quality of roadworks and landscaping carried out by BEAR Scotland and remarked on their stakeholder newsletter. He queried whether there would be any possibility of road closures as a result of Berriedale works – Marco noted that this would depend in part on whether blasting would need to be carried out.

- 5.8.5 Alex Macmanus queried whether works on the bridge at Dunbeath had been completed – Marco noted that these were ongoing.
- 5.8.6 Cllr Donnie Mackay welcomed the works to improve footways in Thurso, queried whether they were still in progress, and noted issues with the area near the Royal Hotel. Marco noted that there was still some work to be done around crossing points and agreed to look at the footway near the Royal Hotel.

CTF(2019)M002/A007 – *Marco Bardelli to ask BEAR Scotland to look at footway in Thurso near Royal Hotel*

5.9 Highland Council

- 5.9.1 Jonathan Gunn provided an update on behalf of Highland Council. Of note:
- The roads programme for 2019/20 has been agreed and includes works at Gills, Keiss and Halkirk, along with surface dressing works
 - The Council has taken possession of a number of new road signs which are awaiting installation – these are predominantly for the North Coast 500 but some relate to the East Caithness Community Facility
 - The Council roads team assisted with cleanup of sand at the esplanade in Thurso following a recent period of high winds – the flood team has now been out to survey the location and they hope this will not recur in future.
- 5.9.2 Marco Bardelli queried when the signage would be up – Jonathan noted that this was awaiting approval and would likely be in August
- 5.9.3 Mike Lunan raised the issue of bad parking in Thurso and queried when enforcement of double yellow lines would be brought in. Alex Macmanus noted that the Traffic Regulation Orders for this were now in place and that relining would be complete by the end of the month. Following this, Council-led parking enforcement would be brought in.
- 5.9.4 Alex noted further that dangerous parking remains a police matter, but that Highland Council were hoping to increase the number of enforcement officers for other parking violations from 12 to 20. It was agreed that representation from Police Scotland should be secured for future meetings of the Forum.

CTF(2019)M002/A008 – *Chamber to secure Police Scotland representation at future meetings*

- 5.9.5 Malcolm Bremner noted an issue where a wall at Harbour Place had failed and scaffolding had been up for over a year, blocking pedestrian access and leading to safety concerns. He noted that the scaffolding was now down but that there was never any provision made for pedestrian access while it was up.
- 5.9.6 Jonathan noted that the land in question was owned by GMR Henderson, and that they had been asked not to carry out further works until the end of the summer season. It was noted that responsibility to repair the embankment is ultimately GMR Henderson's. Jonathan agreed to send a roads inspector out to investigate the issue of pedestrian access once works recommence.

5.10 Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL

- 5.10.1 Trudy Morris provided a brief update on discussions at the Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee, noting that discussions had been on the industrial action by ATCs, concerns over degradation in service, and the possibility of reduction of opening hours at the airport.
- 5.10.2 Trudy further noted that she had recently met with Prospect to discuss the work being done to safeguard and improve services at the airport and to emphasise the need to see issues resolved.
- 5.10.3 Dougie Cook provided an update on behalf of Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL. Of note:
- All industrial action by Prospect has been suspended pending consideration of a new pay offer. The previous action had largely not affected Wick as the majority of ATCs are not part of the union
 - There is still a possibility of change to opening hours at the airport, and HIAL are consulting with all stakeholders
 - Work continues on the centralisation of Air Traffic Management and introduction of remote towers. HIAL are now going through a change management programme and engaging with ATCs on this
 - With regards to SSE / BOWL, they are looking to relocate that SSE hangar to a new location at Wick – once SSE have signed off on this the plans will be put to the CAA for approval
 - Wiking Helicopter are using the airport more frequently for maintenance and training flights
 - Passenger numbers are down 5% year-to-date – this is largely due to a fall in Wick-Edinburgh numbers
 - Aircraft movements are up 5% for the preceding month, but down 9.7% year-to-date
 - Ferry and training flight figures remain largely level
 - Loganair will be removing 14 flights from the Wick-Edinburgh route over the summer schedule – mostly on Sundays but some impact on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
 - A new customer feedback system is in place at the airport and working well
 - There have been some complaints regarding the accuracy of the flight information display – this is in the process of being fixed
 - There are some planned upgrades / refurbishment to the HIAL website
 - With regards to staffing, there is now a full complement of security staff at the airport. There are currently 4 ATCs with one trainee expected to achieve certification in September and one by July 2020 – this will bring ATCs back to full complement

5.10.4 Dougie noted that he would provide some more figures on the Wiking flights

CTF(2019)M002/A010 – Dougie Cook to provide figures on Wiking Helicopter flights at Wick

5.10.5 Allan Tait queried whether the ongoing work with SSE / BOWL could affect discussions on opening hours. Dougie noted that this was possible and that it is a complex issue.

- 5.10.6 Roger Saxon queried timescales on ATM centralisation, noting a recent investment of around £0.5M in the ATC tower at Kirkwall. Mark Stuart noted that this is a long-term process and that work will still need to be done and investment made at airports to maintain day-to-day operations.
- 5.10.7 Roger queried whether, once the process is complete, visual confirmation would still be required locally. Mark Stuart clarified that this would be the purpose of the remote towers, and that staff other than ATCs would remain based at Wick.
- 5.10.8 Mark Stuart provided a brief update on HIAL's investment in Wick John O'Groats Airport as follows:
- Over the past 10 years there has been around £10m invested in the airport, with a further £2m due over the next couple of years
 - This has included investments in toilets, heating and security within the terminal, as well as improvements to the taxiway and to surface water drainage
- 5.10.9 Mark further noted that it costs around £2.5m per year to run Wick John O'Groats, including £1.6m on staff and £350k on maintenance. He noted that HIAL does encourage the airlines to keep services to Wick.
- 5.10.10 Trudy provided a brief update to the Forum on the work the Chamber has been doing on air services from Wick. She noted that a report had recently been finalised by Northpoint Aviation which identified some key options for contingencies should services degrade further, and that the Chamber would shortly be presenting this to Transport Scotland and the Department for Transport.

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1 Allan Tait gave a brief update on the work that local development officers for Thurso, Wick and Rural Caithness have been doing, including some key issues they have identified around transport. It was agreed that Allan would provide more details on this for circulation and that it would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Forum.

CTF(2019)M002/A011 – *Allan Tait to provide information on Local Development Officers' work on transport for discussion at next Forum meeting*

7. Press Communications

- 7.1 There was no discussion on press communications due to time pressures.

8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed as soon as possible once availability had been agreed with Inglis Lyon.

9. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

CTF(2018)M001/A005 - Frank Roach to provide details of station analysis once carried out.

ONGOING

CTF(2018)M003/A006 – Brian Gordon to feed back to Forum on RET rollout when more information available **ONGOING**

CTF(2019)M001/A010 – David Swanson to coordinate with relevant partners on future rail / bus / ferry connectivity **ONGOING**

CTF(2019)M001/A013 – Cllr Nicola Sinclair to feed back to the Forum on discussions around additional roads maintenance budget **ONGOING**

CTF(2019)M001/A019 – Chamber to invite Inglis Lyon to meet with the Forum **ONGOING**

10. Actions arising from this meeting

CTF(2019)M002/A001 – Trudy Morris & Roger Saxon to seek update from DRS on Georgemas freight trial

CTF(2019)M002/A002 – Chamber to collate expressions of support for sleeper & battery train projects

CTF(2019)M002/A003 – Daniel Laird to provide details of proposed changes to services

CTF(2019)M002/A004 – Stagecoach and Chamber to discuss electric vehicle pilot

CTF(2019)M002/A005 – David Liston to provide details of alterations to X99 vehicles

CTF(2019)M002/A006 – Derek Glasgow to feed back on catering issues on Far North Line

CTF(2019)M002/A007 – Marco Bardelli to ask BEAR Scotland to look at footway in Thurso near Royal Hotel

CTF(2019)M002/A008 – Chamber to secure Police Scotland representation at future meetings

CTF(2019)M002/A009 – Highland Council to investigate pedestrian access at Wick Harbour

CTF(2019)M002/A010 – Dougie Cook to provide figures on Wiking Helicopter flights at Wick

CTF(2019)M002/A011 – Allan Tait to provide information on Local Development Officers' work on transport for discussion at next Forum meeting

Appendix A

Caithness Transport Forum – 13 June 2019 Transport Scotland Ferries Unit - Update

Northern Isles Ferry Service Tender

- Bids were received from Serco NorthLink Ferries and CalMac Ltd on 29 April. Förde Reederei Seetouristik GmbH (FRS) did not submit a bid. Following detailed evaluation, the new contract is due to start on 31 October 2019. The timeline for the tender and delivery of the new contract is underway and currently on schedule. It is, however, subject to the completion of the on-going legal challenge. We anticipate that the outcome of the tender procedure will be announced in August 2019.

Judicial Review

- In response to Pentland Ferries' legal challenge, on 26 April at the Court of Session, Lord Boyd rejected the arguments and dismissed the legal challenge. Pentland Ferries has since appealed the decision, which was heard at the Court of Session on 5 and 7 June.
- Scottish Ministers robustly defended their position and we expect a decision to the appeal in July. The procurement process will continue as planned, pending the outcome of the appeal and similar complaint to the European Commission.

RET on the Northern Isles

- An official State aid complaint was made on 8 June 2018 by Pentland Ferries regarding ferry services to Orkney. Reducing fares on ferry services on the Northern Isles ferry network remains a top priority for the Scottish Government and we will continue to pursue all avenues to deliver Road Equivalent Tariff. Given the State aid complaint, we need to await the outcome of that process.

Freight Fares Review

- Transport Scotland, under guidance of a working group of key stakeholders, is conducting a comprehensive review of ferry freight fares. We have always been clear that there is no commitment on timing, although work to conclude the review is on-going. Much work has already been done on this complex subject area and further information will be made available in due course.

Orkney / Shetland Internal Ferries Funding

- The Scottish Government understands the significant financial challenges that can fall on individual local authorities. This year's budget has made available a further £10.5 million in support for internal ferry services, bringing the total support in the last two years to £21 million. This ensures that both council's total Scottish Government funding for ferries through GAE plus their share of the £10.5m is equal as a percentage of the total cost of running their respective ferry services.

Appendix B



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 13th June 2019

SCRABSTER HARBOUR UPDATE

The Scrabster harbour is managed by Scrabster Harbour Trust, established in 1841 and governed by its own legislation. The Trust seeks to serve the local community and all surpluses created are reinvested into the port.

1. TRAFFIC STATISTICS

Financial year 2018-19, finished on 31st March 2019. The traffic statistics for the year were as follows:

- Total vessel arrivals 2,480 compared with 2,302 in 2017-18
- Total vessel tonnage 8.512 million tonnes compared with 8.367 million tonnes in 2017-18
- Ferry Passenger numbers were 153,530 up 4.3% on the previous year
- Cruise passengers 4,390
- Fish box landings 335,049, an increase of 15% on last year.
- Increase in oil and gas activity, maintenance of fish cargo volumes and coastal tanker fuel volumes.



Overall it was an extremely successful trading period with record revenues being achieved for the 5th successive year.

2. CRUISE

The 2019 cruise season began on the 29th April with the visit of Phoenix Reisen's Hamburg. To date we have had 3 cruise arrivals and a further 10 calls per scheduled before the season ends in September.

3. DEVELOPMENTS

The Trust has continued to progress plans to redevelop the existing St Ola Pier. Following evaluation of expressions of interest, the Trust has selected 3 bidders to take part in a negotiated process leading to the selection of a preferred contractor.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority awarded the project £5m of grant funding in April.



Photograph of original Ola Pier Construction

The project will require licensing consent from Marine Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Following screening and scoping submissions the project was determined to be an EIA development by Marine Scotland. Project design has progressed in parallel with preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The Marine licence applications are expected to be submitted at the beginning of July.

A Public Consultation event will be held between 14.00 and 20.00 hours on Friday 14th June 2019 in St Ola House, Scrabster.

Assuming favourable outcomes to funding and consenting, the current programme shows a late January 2020 construction start with completion scheduled during the second quarter of 2021

5th June 2019

Appendix C – Pentland Ferries

RET

The complaint raised with the European Commissioner has been handed back to the Scottish Government to come up with a scheme that is legal and meets state aid rules. We have had no further contact from Scottish Government to date.

New Vessel

Last week the ship underwent its official sea trials which went well. Unfortunately due to further delays in finishing the vessel we are now looking at the MV Alfred being ready for handover at the start of July. With a six week delivery voyage and crew familiarisation we would expect the ship to go into service in September all being well.

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Appendix D

GILLS HARBOUR REPORT FOR THE JUNE, 2019, MEETING OF THE CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM.

1) Social media video-tapes of the brand-new '*Alfred*', Pentland Ferries Ltd's new RoPax flagship, undergoing her sea-trials in the warm tropical seas off Vietnam were proving popular with Canisbay's teenagers as May, 2019, ended.

It is now understood that it will be into 'high summer' July before the 85 metre vessel commences her planned regular scheduled crossings across the Pentland Firth from Gills Bay to St. Margaret's Hope. This will be a 1 hour voyage for the commercial catamaran ship that ... like the modern terminal complex at Gills ... has been funded entirely from the private sector by the family company headed by noted North of Scotland entrepreneur Mr Andrew Banks, OBE.

Alfred, which is 22 metres wide, is powered by four Yanmar engines will have a service speed of 16 knots and had powerful side-thrusters to speed-up berthing operations at Gills in windy conditions.

The 430-passenger catamaran ... Scotland's most modern ferry ... can carry 12 arctic. trailers with 54 cars or 98 cars in total.

And staff at Pentland Ferries Gills office say that she cannot arrive a moment too soon; wait-lists have been operated on some sailings since early May, whilst the existing 70 metre *Pentalina* (built 2008) has been running to near capacity in June. The new ship was designed by British naval architects BMT Nigel Gee and was built at the wholly-covered Vung Tau, Vietnam, yard of Strategic Marine (Vietnam) pty, the Australian-owned facility that specialises in creating steel-hull 'cats' with aluminium superstructures.

Alfred is one of three cat RoPax ferries built for Europe and launched within 8 weeks in early 2019 at SMV's facility. Two slightly smaller vessels are bound for the Netherlands where they will ply from the Dutch mainland across the Wadden Sea ... an inlet of the Southern North Sea ... to the West Frisian Islands. Their owner, Doeksen Shipping, introduced 'cats' to European island crossings as far back as 1973.

The Australians are world leaders in twin-hull ship-building with the concept widely believed to have been developed from the outrigger canoes of the South Pacific; however a Tamil Nadu historian claims that sailing catamaran cargo-ships were plying from S. India to Indonesia a millennium ago.

Vung Tau is a two-hour drive from the airport at Ho Chi Min City (formerly Saigon) and the present popularity of Vietnam as a 'young adventures' holiday destination probably accounts for the *Alfred* videos.

2) To continue the Aussie theme, Mr Tim Cornelius, CEO of Simec Atlantis Energy plc ... a native of that Antipodes country ... confirmed at Glasgow's All Energy conference in May 2019 that his Edinburgh h.q. company is to proceed with the multi-million pound Project Stroma at its MeyGen site in the Pentland Firth's Inner Sound.

The neap-tide sequence at the tail-end of May saw the first indications of movement when the high-speed specialist ROV vessel *Advance* made a welcome return to local waters on early survey duties for the project.

Crew and technicians on board spent several days using ROVs ... remote operated vehicles ... to scan the 35 metre deep seabed on the projected site for two brand-new AR2000 generating turbines each of 2 MW capacity. The company is also seeking the best sea-floor location for a brand-new seabed based 'hub', from whence a single heavily-armoured cable will deliver the electricity to the shore-station at Ness of Quoys, 1 mile along the Bay, east of Gills Harbour.

Advance, that was a frequent visitor to Gills during the original survey work on the four-turbine MeyGen sub-sea site in 2016/17, is owned by Roving Eye Enterprises Ltd of Orphir, on the shores of Scapa Flow, Orkney.

This move will keep tidal stream electricity in the UK 'ticking over' as indications at the above conference were that any such projects were unlikely to get UK Government backing under the 2019 CfD ... 'contracts for difference' ... deals due to be announced this summer, where offshore wind is expected to predominate.

In the meantime, the Tidal Energy Council ... of which Gills Harbour is a member ... is calling for a re-think on means of backing one of the few 'future energy' prospects where the UK has a genuine world lead. It wants tax concessions to be 'ring-fenced' for companies using this 'less well-established' tidal stream marine energy technology that has been developed practically during the 21st C's second decade. This would be rather than having consumers paying a bit extra 'on their bills'.

Ninety-one MPs have signed a letter to Energy Minister Ms Claire Perry MP requesting this 'step up' change for support to tidal stream electricity in the Government's forthcoming Energy White Paper.

3) Damage to the seaward end section of the original 450' (136m) long Gills Pier caused by the '*Beast from the East*' storms of late winter 2018 was successfully remedied by staff from Wick-based contractor GMR Henderson Ltd, just before the end of the financial year in late March, 2019.

The contractor found that the 'voids' beneath the step-down slipway berth were much bigger than anticipated from the photographs supplied and the site visit that was carried out by an 'experienced marine civils works supervisor' from the firm.

This meant that instead of 8 cubic metres, the total had to be re-estimated at 24 c. m. with an obvious increase in labour costs as well.

Community-owned Gills Harbour Ltd is grateful to the help that it received from Marine Scotland's fisheries section and from the Greencoat Stroupster Community Fund in this expenditure.

It is also very grateful to Canisbay-based Mr Derry Ross ... arguably the most experienced marine construction expert in Caithness ... who headed the on-site team and went 'beyond the call of duty' by being there on some days from 05:00 onwards in poor sea-splash conditions to ensure that works proceeded smoothly at low water during the late March 'stream tides' sequence.

This berth is the most popular one for work-boats involved in tidal stream energy developments as well as for local fishing vessels.

GHL is also in the final stages of preparing and discussing improved 'pier to vessel' access under a (largely) European-funded FLAG scheme and is hopeful of a successful outcome over the Summer.

4) Mr Eann Sinclair, Highlands & Islands Enterprise's recently-appointed area manager for Caithness and North Sutherland, was given a guided tour of Gills Harbour that he visited towards the end of May.

The main topic was an on-site discussion of GHL's agreed plans to develop an all-tides, all-weather deepened base for work-boats of up to 26 metres to service the Inner Sound and (later) other leased ea-floor areas of the Pentland Firth.

All four licenced seabed sites can be accessed from Gills without having to transit one or other of the two main Pentland Firth tide-races off the Caithness shores, known to us as *roosts*, where white-water waves break 365 days per year.

A deepened Inner Basin with some vertical quay walls, will also help local fishing vessels and could enable new local tourism businesses, such as whale-watching or seabird colony observations.

While the outlines of the design are known through wave-study work done by a graduate team from the Environmental Research Institute of the University of the Highlands & Islands' Thurso campus and by using feasibility and costing studies done by prominent Inverness based international economics consultant Mr Tony Mackay, the details need to be 'filled in' with professional civil engineering expertise.

GHL hopes that this can be substantially done during the summer of 2019.

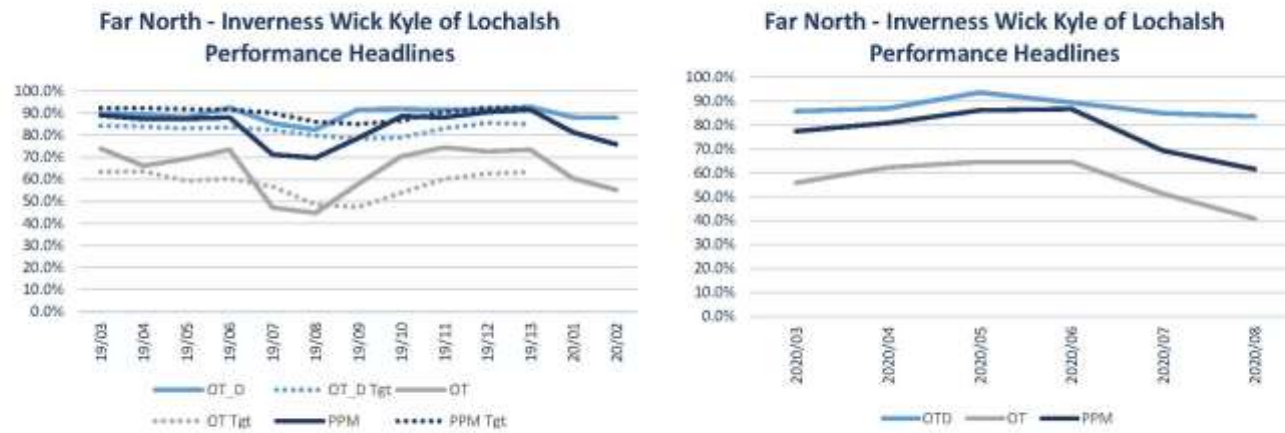
5) GHL hopes to substantially upgrade an area in its 100% ownership at the 'back' (i.e. SW corner) of the harbour that could prove invaluable to users and hopefully provide some additional revenue-earning facilities there and is in early stages of investigating such proposed works.

6) The community company has several VIP visitors pencilled in for summer visits and those will be reported on later.

ends

Appendix E – ScotRail

Far North - Inverness Wick Kyle of Lochalsh Line of Route Performance Profile



Far North - Inverness Wick Kyle of Lochalsh

Top10 Incidents - Previous 6 Weeks

Inc Dt	Inc Loc	Memo	Inc Cse	Dsc	Bus Cd Nm	Ppm	Fail D	Canc
13/05/19	WCK GGI	WCK GGI 20MPH ESR SL	RAIL FLAW		NETWORK RAIL	44	0	
16/04/19	STC	STC PSI PTS FLR	POINTS FLR		NETWORK RAIL	8	0	
23/05/19	IGD	IGD RETB FLR	PHONE/SPT		NETWORK RAIL	7	0	
23/04/19	INVERNESS	1HB0 RADIO FLT INV	PHONE/SPT		NETWORK RAIL	6	2	
28/01/19	WCK GGI	WCK GGI 20 MPH ESR	SEV FLOOD		NETWORK RAIL	5	0	
15/05/19	KYL STC	2HB2 RETB FAULT KYL STC	RADIO FLR		NETWORK RAIL	5	0	
27/04/19	IGD	TRESPASS IGD	TRESPASS		NETWORK RAIL	4	0	
25/05/19	WCK	2HG2 SET FLT WCK	ABOVE SBAR		TOC ON SELF	4	0	
13/05/19	DIN ACN	2HB1 49 LDST DIN ACN	LEVEL XING		NETWORK RAIL	4	1	
26/04/19	THS	2HG2 SET GLT THS	RADIO FLR		NETWORK RAIL	3	0	

Far North - Inverness Wick Kyle of Lochalsh Line of Route Performance Profile

Top 10 Causes over the past 6 Weeks

	Inc	PPMf	Canc
RAIL FLAW	12	44	2
DRIVER	42	34	15
PHONE/SPT	5	14	2
RADIO FLR	7	11	2
UN-INVEST	10	9	1
PASSENGERS	19	8	0
POINTS FLR	1	8	0
TRESPASS	6	7	0
ABOVE SBAR	3	6	2
LEVEL XING	9	5	1

Key Location Headline Stats

Location	OT_D	OT	PPM
CLUNES	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FODDERTY	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ACHNASHEL	50.0%	0.0%	28.6%
EVANTON	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%
FORRES	40.0%	60.0%	80.0%
NAIRN	40.0%	60.0%	80.0%
ELGIN		80.0%	80.0%
ROGART	37.5%	4.4%	47.8%
MUIROFORD	12.5%	17.3%	38.5%
FORSINARD	23.1%	40.9%	64.8%
GARVE	45.7%	57.6%	82.8%
ARDGAY	67.6%	52.7%	78.6%
WICK	97.9%	40.0%	60.7%
KYLEOFLOC	95.3%	39.7%	68.2%
HELMSDALE	31.2%	42.9%	65.2%
BRORA	36.7%	35.9%	63.4%
LAIRG	40.9%	41.5%	70.2%
THURSO	43.7%	46.8%	66.6%
GEORGMASJ	44.1%	47.5%	65.7%
ACHNASHEN	36.5%	49.7%	86.2%
STRCARRON	42.4%	54.6%	87.4%
FEARN	49.2%	54.0%	80.4%
TAIN	50.2%	55.4%	80.8%
INVERNESS	84.1%	65.4%	81.7%
INVERGRDN	50.0%	58.1%	82.9%
DINGWALL	58.2%	63.6%	85.3%

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