



# Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

**Date:** 05/03/2015

**Time:** 11:30am

**Location:** Mackays Hotel, Wick

## Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (Minute Secretary)
Eann Sinclair	Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
Ken Nicol	Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd
David Flear	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Christine Dodd	Highland Council
Donnie Mackay	Highland Council
Gail Ross	Highland Council
Gillian Coghill	Highland Council
Iain Moncrieff	Highland Council
John Rosie	Highland Council
Roger Saxon	Highland Council
William Sutherland	Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd
James Linklater	Serco NorthLink Ferries
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour Trust
Steve Walker	Stagecoach North Scotland
Howard Little	Stagecoach North Scotland

## 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:

Peter Body	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
Jean Lipa	Thurso Community Council
John Yellowlees	ScotRail
Alastair Somerville	Transport Scotland
Iain Macdonald	BEAR Scotland
Mark Norton	Norlag
Gordon Doull	Wick Harbour

## 2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 05.12.2014

2.1 There being no alterations or comments, the minutes of the last meeting were unanimously approved

## 3. Matters arising

Trudy Morris raised the issue of funding for the Caithness Transport Forum, which is currently provided by Highland Council and Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd.

Dounreay have committed funding for three years, but the Highland Council portion must be applied for year on year. The councillors have this year not approved this funding.

Trudy noted that the Chamber facilitates the Forum on behalf of Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration partnership, and that discussions are ongoing with partners regarding funding, but that the implications of the funding gap must be assessed going forward.

**CTF(2015)M001/A001** – *Trudy Morris to discuss funding for Caithness Transport Forum with CNSRP partners*

She noted that a lot of work is done outside of the meetings in terms of e.g. responding to consultations and lobbying on transport issues.

Trudy asked if the councillors present could give feedback on this matter.

John Rosie asked if Trudy could clarify what the Transport Forum budget is spent on

Trudy noted that this was all contained in the original proposal put to the Highland Council and Dounreay

Gail Ross noted that it was not a case of value for money, rather the vehicle for funding. She noted that the Discretionary Fund is not intended for use for recurring funding, and that the budget for these funds is being cut year-on-year.

Gail noted that if the money could be found from somewhere else, the local councillors would be very glad to see the meetings continue.

David Flear agreed with Gail's point regarding the purpose of the Discretionary Fund. He noted that Highland Council is a member of CNSRP, and had made Caithness & North Sutherland a priority area, due to the decommissioning of Dounreay. He noted his concern that this may not be being taken on board when considering decisions, for example, regarding the funding for the Caithness Transport Forum.

Steve Walker asked if only the Caithness Transport Forum had not received funding and whether, for example, Lochaber Transport Forum was in the same position. He noted that the Caithness Transport Forum is highly proactive and effective.

Trudy noted that she was not in a position to be aware of Lochaber Transport Forum's funding, but asked if Steve could forward some contacts for the group.

**CTF(2015)M001/A002** – *Steve Walker to forward contact information for Lochaber Transport Forum to David Swanson*

John Rosie noted his concerns regarding the age of the transport infrastructure in the region and the potential impact this has on attracting business, particularly with regards the Pentland Firth. William Sutherland noted that it is important not to send the wrong message.

Trudy noted that the value of the Forum is bringing stakeholders and providers together to effect change, but that many of the issues discussed are long-term and require continual lobbying.

Roger Saxon asked what the position is with the Transport Forum if funding cannot be secured. Trudy noted that the Chamber would have to relook at what is delivered, as the current activity is based on the original proposed funding.

David Flear again noted his concern that the Highland Council, as a key partner, are not putting funding in to the Forum.

Trudy noted her hope that funding can be found for the Forum and her belief that the work it does is worthwhile.

Eann Sinclair noted that the fact that the local councillors consider the Forum to be value for money is helpful when looking at alternative Council funding streams.

Steve Walker asked for clarification that the funding gap is £10,000 – Trudy confirmed this.

There was some discussion of how the Transport Forum feeds into the wider CNSRP priorities.

Steve Walker asked if there was potential for transport operators such as Stagecoach to part-fund the Forum.

James Linklater noted that he could not commit to funding, but that he felt there is a benefit to the Forum. He noted that from his point of view, working with the Forum has changed how NorthLink operate in the area.

David Flear asked if attendees at the Forum could give letters of support, emphasising the value of the work the Forum does. Trudy noted that this would be useful.

**CTF(2015)M001/A003** – *David Swanson to liaise with operators and stakeholders to get letters of support by 13th March*

Trudy asked if Gail Ross, as local leader, could take this matter back to the Highland Council. Gail agreed that she could, once there are letters of support available.

**CTF(2015)M001/A004** – *Following completion of A003, Gail Ross to feed back to Highland Council regarding funding for the Caithness Transport Forum*

### **3. Review of actions from last meeting**

**CTF(2014)M003/A001** – *Chamber to get update from DRS on Georgemas railhead. Complete*

It was noted that this would be discussed later on in the agenda

**CTF(2014)M003/A005** – *Chamber to feed back to BEAR regarding engagement with CTF and to get update on winter works programme. Ongoing*

An update was received from BEAR (Appendix A) – to be discussed later in the agenda – but it was felt important that they should send a representative to the Forum

**CTF(2014)M004/A001** – *Deirdre Mackay to get an update on flood defence planning for the Highlands. Complete*

Trudy confirmed that this information was received and circulated to the Forum.

**CTF(2014)M004/A002** – *David Swanson to circulate information on Highland Council capital programme. Complete*

Trudy confirmed that this had been circulated to the Forum

Gail Ross noted that the capital programme is on the agenda for the full Council meeting on Thursday

**CTF(2014)M004/A003** – *Iain Moncrieff to talk to haulage companies about issues with timber lorries. Complete*

Iain confirmed this had been actioned and that it would be addressed during his update

**CTF(2014)M004/A004** – *Chamber to seek meeting with new Transport Minister. Complete*

This had been actioned (see 4. Berriedale Braes)

**CTF(2014)M004/A005** – *Mark Norton to forward Abellio contact details to David Swanson. Complete*

David confirmed this had been actioned.

## 4. Berriedale Braes

Trudy met with Scottish Chambers of Commerce and Derek Mackay, the new Transport Minister, to see if funding for Berriedale could be confirmed before the next spending review in October.

The meeting was positive in that the Minister recognised Berriedale as a top priority. There was no commitment available at this date with regards to funding.

John Rosie noted his displeasure that the Scottish Government has not progressed this, given the small amount of money required. Trudy noted that the cost is likely to be more than earlier estimates.

Trudy noted that Andy Anderson, of Transport Scotland, was also at the meeting, and that there have been two challenges to the draft orders for Berriedale. This has the potential to delay the works, but there is confidence that both objections can be dealt with.

Eann Sinclair noted that the CNSRP chairman wrote to Derek Mackay and that the response was largely positive. He noted that the Forum and CNSRP can have an influential role in this matter over the next six months. Eann further noted that CNSRP have Berriedale as a major project in their high-level programme, and that they will be working with Transport Scotland to make them aware that there is room for a partnership approach to funding.

Trudy noted that Scottish Chambers are working on this issue at a national level. She further noted that ERDF funding has been used for roads projects in the past, but that it is public bodies that are responsible for disbursing European funding. She felt that there was room for a conversation with, for example, HIE to discuss how these funds will be used.

John Rosie raised an issue regarding the safety at Berriedale. David Flear noted that the key issue with regards to Berriedale is not safety, but economic development.

Trudy assured the Forum that the Chamber will continue to push on this issue.

## 5.1 Roads – Highland Council

Iain Moncrieff gave an update on behalf of Highland Council Community Services. Of note:

- The winter period saw some snow, frost and ice, as well as some storm damage
- Roads inspections continue – they have had some issues with utility contractors not giving appropriate notice of works (the standard is 5 days), and carrying out poor reinstatements and poor traffic management. The plan is to take a 10% sample and go back to contractors.
- They will be patching defects in a number of areas across the County
- Flood works at Bridgend survived very well during the stormy weather, despite a 2m storm surge. There was some damage to the Thurso slipway
- Across Caithness, drainage works have been carried out at around 20 sites
- Scottish Water have agreed to repair damage caused by works at Lybster
- Some recent reinstatement work carried out by BT has been to a poor standard and dangerous – the Council has addressed this and ordered BT to fix the issue

Trudy asked whether it was BT's responsibility to carry out reinstatement works – Iain confirmed, noting that they can put temporary reinstatements in place for six months and after that period have to put a permanent solution in place.

Iain further noted that claims for damage due to the poor reinstatement works have been forwarded to BT, and that BT's local agent will be explaining the situation to residents in affected areas.

With regards to the retirement of the local roads inspector, Trudy asked whether he will be replaced – Iain confirmed that he would be, but could not give a timescale. He noted that it would be difficult to find someone with similar experience.

Trudy raised an issue regarding a pothole at Ormlie Road by Thurso Rail Station which had damaged her car – Iain confirmed this would be looked at.

It was raised that there have been a number of reports from local garages with regards to damage to cars, and enquired as to what the policy is on paying out for damage done to vehicles – Iain noted

that Highland Council have a robust policy on this and that negligence needs to be shown in order for a payment to be made.

David Flear raised a recent issue with local contractors not being used to deal with fallen trees. Iain noted that there are no local contractors with the appropriate ticket on the Highland Council procurement system. He further noted that in emergency situations, the Forestry Commission can assist.

It was raised that there is a local licensed contractor and queried why they were not used. It was felt that Highland Council should be giving work to local firms. Iain noted that the contractor in question was not on the tender list, and that larger firms can have an easier time clearing pre-qualification.

There was some discussion regarding Highland Council procurement policy, with regards to sustainable procurement, and it was agreed that Trudy Morris and Eann Sinclair would work to get an understanding of the issues affecting local contractors.

**CTF(2015)M001/A005** – *Trudy Morris and Eann Sinclair to get information on difficulties local contractors have with Highland Council procurement system*

Christine Dodd noted that the Council does hold local meetings with procurement officers that are open to anyone interested in registering on the system. In response to a point from Donnie regarding the difficulty of registering and then potentially not winning contracts, she noted that once registered all the information is kept online, simplifying the process, but agreed that getting registered can be difficult.

There was some further discussion around contracts and the difficulty of pre-qualification for SMEs.

Iain noted that the jetpatcher that had previously been trialled was now showing disappointing results, with around 60-70% failure. They have had discussions with the manufacturer, but it does not appear a promising option. He noted that they are now looking at purchasing a hot box, which will allow them to buy in tar and patch as needed.

Iain gave an update with regards to capital works, noting that the A99 Keiss – North Keiss works are in progress but that the Killimster Moss (B876) has not been included in the capital programme. He noted that capital can become available, dependent on the outcome of other projects.

Roger Saxon asked whether works would go ahead if capital became available. Iain noted that this is now a matter for Design & Infrastructure, rather than Community Services.

With regards to accidents, there have been a couple of incidents with HGVs using unsuitable roads and overturning – Iain noted that to put restrictions on the roads would impact local traffic, so the Council has written to the respective haulage companies to remind them to stick to appropriate roads.

With regards to timber extraction, there has been a meeting with the Forestry Commission regarding Westerdale – Iain could not go into depth at this point but was confident there would be a resolution to the issue.

## 5.2 Roads – BEAR Scotland

A written update was provided by BEAR Scotland (Appendix A).

Trudy noted there are no works planned for the A9-A99 junction, which is in poor condition.

Gail Ross noted that the A9 both North and South of Ousdale (between Berriedale and Navidale) is in poor condition.

It was agreed that this would be fed back to BEAR

**CTF(2015)M001/A006** – *David Swanson to feed back to BEAR on issues with A9*

## 5.3 Buses – Stagecoach

Steve Walker provided an update on behalf of Stagecoach. Of note:

- They have had a number of issues in the last few months, and accept that the situation has not been good. They have been working on this and made a number of changes
- The maintenance schedule is back on track, and some newer vehicles are in place
- There are no major service changes planned
- Howard Little is currently standing in for Stan Towers locally

Trudy asked if Steve could elaborate on the issues over the last few months – Steve noted that procedures have not been carried out as they should be, but that he is confident reliability is back up to standard.

Gail Ross thanked Steve and Christine Dodd for their prompt responses to the Wick High School Parent Council following recent issues.

Trudy also thanked Stagecoach for their consistent attendance at the meetings and for their honesty on this matter.

## 5.4 Sea – Scrabster Harbour

A written update was provided by Scrabster Harbour (Appendix B), and Sandy Mackie delivered a verbal update. Of note:

- With regards to ferries, they recognise that 2013 was a difficult year

- The increase in fishing reflects the good infrastructure, fuel price and market rates
- They are beginning to see more regular visits from oil and gas supply vessels
- General cargo is expected to decrease over the coming years, with not as much timber passing through the harbor
- They will be working with the Highland Council on an emergency exercise
- Sandy emphasized that Scrabster is keen to see business from all sectors
- Their current challenge is capacity, and that there are less breaks available for development
- With regards to Crown Estate devolution, they believe Scrabster Harbour Trust is ideally placed to manage local Crown Estate assets

Roger Saxon asked what the prospects are for taking forward work at the top of the hill. Sandy noted that they are looking at whether this is something they can take forward themselves.

Iain Moncrieff noted that in discussions he has had, the timber industry felt using Scrabster can be difficult. He enquired as to the possibility of putting down hard standing and access for timber storage.

Sandy noted that they are looking at this, and that Scrabster do try to accommodate the industry. He noted that timber has been stored for up to three months on some occasions and that they can command higher storage rates from other sectors.

Donnie Mackay noted that the Fishermen's Mission at Scrabster is currently empty and that MeyGen are looking for property – Sandy noted that they are in discussions with MeyGen.

## 5.5 Sea – Wick Harbour

A written update was provided from Wick Harbour (Appendix C).

Eann Sinclair noted that Moray Offshore Renewables Ltd intent to resubmit their application for support.

## 5.6 Serco NorthLink

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

- They are still operating their off-peak schedule – as of the end of May they will add seven additional sailings
- Passenger figures are up and they are looking at options to promote the use of the route, including leaflet drops in the islands and the introduction of a single Lerwick-Kirkwall-Scrabster ticket
- They are operating the 'Landbridge' promotion B&B 7 days a week and have had 35 bookings for this so far – there is room to develop this

- They have produced 300,000 leaflets to help promote the route in Caithness and Aberdeen
- A twelve-page guide has been produced and distributed to VisitScotland
- They have had some sailings amended or cancelled due to weather issues, and one return sailing cancelled for maintenance
- They are keen to bring accessibility to the forefront, as their access has been classified as very good and this is a potential area of untapped tourism

David Flear noted that the leaflets James had brought made no mention of Caithness – James noted that Caithness is mentioned on those produced for the Orkney and Shetland markets.

David further asked what NorthLink are doing to promote Caithness – James noted that they have made local organisations aware of promotional opportunities, but have had no uptake.

**CTF(2015)M001/A007** – *David Swanson to liaise with James Linklater on encouraging local organisations to take up NorthLink marketing opportunities*

James noted that they have free business listings available on the NorthLink website. Trudy said she would also put Venture North in contact with James

**CTF(2015)M001/A008** – *James Linklater to forward details of free business listings on NorthLink website to David Swanson*

**CTF(2015)M001/A009** – *Trudy Morris to send contact for Venture North to James Linklater*

Trudy enquired as to the progress on a replacement for the Hamnavoe during its dry dock in 2016. James noted that he has nothing concrete at the moment but that they are in discussions with Transport Scotland regarding alternative tonnage and that he will update as soon as possible.

## 5.7 Air – Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd

William Sutherland delivered an update on behalf of Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. Of note:

- Passenger numbers are up 86% overall, due to oil and gas traffic, and figures for both airlines are up slightly
- They have had successful contracts with Chevron and Premier Oil, and are hopeful to secure more
- They are working with partners to do all they can, but there has been a downturn in the sector overall. Wick can offer a big cost saving over Aberdeen.
- They have a local contractor on board for work over the next three years
- They are in dialogue with SSE regarding the Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm
- They have two new fire appliances at the airport

- The intention is to replace the apron this year, and they will work to keep disruption to a minimum
- The hangar doors are due to be replaced by the next meeting

Roger Saxon noted that with regards to crew transfers, increased safety is also important and that Wick can offer this as well as cost benefits.

## 5.8 Rail – Direct Rail Services

Trudy noted that a number of the Forum members attended a stakeholder event in Inverness with DRS – it was felt that this was a positive event. She noted that DRS are in discussions with an Aberdeen-based company regarding shipments to Georgemas.

DRS have agreed that they will communicate updates with regards to Georgemas through the Caithness Transport Forum.

David Swanson delivered a further update on this. Of note:

- DRS emphasized that the key point for them is sustainability of service, both commercially and with regards to perception of rail.
- It would cost roughly £300,000 each to install passing loops – it is important that there needs to be a strong business case for this

David noted that he had recently had an enquiry from Barry Earl at DRS regarding local hauliers.

Ken Nicol noted that one of the issues relates to backloads – shipping materials back down from Caithness. He has taken a number of actions from the event to go back to DRS to see how this can be addressed.

David Flear noted that, moving forward, DRS will need to look at access to the A9. Trudy and Ken both noted that DRS have spoken to Transport Scotland regarding this and that there are a number of options to address this.

## 5.9 Rail – ScotRail

David Swanson delivered an update on an Abellio stakeholder briefing event in Inverness. Of note:

- The “ScotRail in the Community” programme will extend ScotRail’s community engagement, and community liaison executives will be appointed for this purpose
- There will be a local manager for the Far North Line, based in Inverness and dealing with both customer service and operational issues
- Plans for a “Deep Alliance” – a collaborative approach with Network Rail to improve the rail network

- The Highland Railcard will continue, Club 55 will become Club 50
- There are plans to improve the rolling stock – reliability, interiors and quality – and to introduce tourist trains on the Far North Line. These will have tourism ambassadors on board and feature locally-sourced catering

James Linklater noted that the discount currently offered by NorthLink in conjunction with ScotRail will continue.

Christine Dodd enquired as to whether, with improvements to the rolling stock, first class tickets will now be available all the way up to Wick, as currently passengers have to buy one ticket from Wick-Inverness and another one from Inverness further South – David said he could take this back to ScotRail.

There was some concern that the presentation focused strongly on Inverness.

Roger Saxon raised that he would like to see more investment in stations on the Far North Line – he also raised concern with the practice of discharging sewage on to the track.

David also delivered an update on HITRANS’ “Points North” seminar in Dingwall. Of note:

- There is growth on the Far North Line as a whole over the last 10 years
- There are a number of causes for the recent service issues:
  - Modelling provided for the re-opening of Conon Bridge station was not accurate with regards to the impact on the timetable
  - Use of GPS tracking data for trains revealed a number of underlying issues
- Improvement has been seen in the first 70 days of the new timetable – 60% arriving at the right time, 79% within Public Performance Measure (PPM)
- A working group was set up to discuss opportunities for improvement on the line – as a result, 25 opportunities have been identified for improvements to the Far North Line, 23 of which passed initial review – these cover e.g. improvements to line speed, removing speed restrictions, etc.
- 7 of these are short term (next 18 months), 10 medium term (within the current Control Period e.g next 4 years), 8 longer term (2019 and beyond)
- Longer term, the Scotland Route Study will inform the strategic direction for the railway over the next 30 years
- A draft for consultation is expected in November or December 2015
- The plan is to reconvene in one year (March 2016) to examine progress

David noted that Network Rail have apparently had no information on future freight aspirations for the Far North Line – this has been taken back to DRS.

David Flear asked whether the Forum could input into the route study prior to the consultation – David noted that HITRANS are involved in the process

Roger Saxon asked whether there were any plans to set up a community liaison group for the Far North Line.

**CTF(2015)M001/A010** – *David Swanson to contact Abellio regarding issues raised at the meeting*

**CTF(2015)M001/A011** – *David Swanson to circulate presentations from Abellio, DRS and HITRANS events*

**CTF(2015)M001/A012** – *Chamber to organise meeting with Abellio to discuss the Far North Line*

David Flear asked who locally sits on the HITRANS Rail Stakeholder Group. It was agreed that Eann Sinclair would take forward rail issues through CNSRP.

**CTF(2015)M001/A013** – *Eann Sinclair to feed discussions on rail to HITRANS Rail Stakeholder Group through CNSRP*

It was noted that the long-term nature of some of the proposed solutions for the Far North Line are a good example of why a body such as the Forum is required.

## **6. Any Other Business**

Christine Dodd noted that she could provide some contact information for those with queries about Highland Council procurement

**CTF(2015)M001/A014** – *Christine Dodd to provide contacts for Highland Council procurement issues*

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015 in Thurso.

## **8. Actions ongoing from previous meetings**

**CTF(2014)M003/A005** – *Chamber to feed back to BEAR regarding engagement with CTF and to get update on winter works programme.*

## 9. Actions arising from this meeting

**CTF(2015)M001/A001** – *Trudy Morris to discuss funding for Caithness Transport Forum with CNSRP partners*

**CTF(2015)M001/A002** – *Steve Walker to forward contact information for Lochaber Transport Forum to David Swanson*

**CTF(2015)M001/A003** – *David Swanson to liaise with operators and stakeholders to get letters of support by 13<sup>th</sup> March*

**CTF(2015)M001/A004** – *Following completion of A003, Gail Ross to feed back to Highland Council regarding funding for the Caithness Transport Forum*

**CTF(2015)M001/A005** – *Trudy Morris and Eann Sinclair to get information on difficulties local contractors have with Highland Council procurement system*

**CTF(2015)M001/A006** – *David Swanson to feed back to BEAR on issues with A9*

**CTF(2015)M001/A007** – *David Swanson to liaise with James Linklater on encouraging local organisations to take up NorthLink marketing opportunities*

**CTF(2015)M001/A008** – *James Linklater to forward details of free business listings on NorthLink website to David Swanson*

**CTF(2015)M001/A009** – *Trudy Morris to send contact for Venture North to James Linklater*

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**CTF(2015)M001/A013** – *Eann Sinclair to feed discussions on rail to HITRANS Rail Stakeholder Group through CNSRP*

**CTF(2015)M001/A014** – *Christine Dodd to provide contacts for Highland Council procurement issues*

# Appendix A - BEAR Scotland Update 2015-03-05

## **Maintenance Works**

- A9 Thurso Central resurfacing Scheme – Visual survey completed on-site and road coring to inform the design is programmed for March. All going to plan, we are aiming to be on site in Spring / early Summer (May).
- A9 Upper Latherton – Patching resurfacing works are programmed for May under dayshift convoy TM.
- A9 Tacher – Patching resurfacing works are programmed in May under dayshift convoy TM.
- A9 South of Ousdale – Patching resurfacing works are programmed in early June under day-shift convoy TM.
- A9 Achavanich to Tacher – Drainage improvements (ditching) is programmed for autumn 2015 under dayshift temporary traffic signals.
- A99 Latheron to Wick – Road stud replacement is programmed for winter 2015 under dayshift stop/go boards.

## **Berriedale Braes**

My colleagues in Major Transport and Infrastructure Projects (MTRIPS) are continuing to progress the design of the Berriedale Braes improvement scheme as a priority and are making good progress with draft Orders published late last year.

Subject to completion of the statutory process we expect to publish Made Orders in the spring and be ready to invite tenders in the autumn should the funding be available.

# Appendix B



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014

## SCRABSTER HARBOUR UPDATE

### 1. OVERALL

Calendar year 2014 was a particularly busy year for the port with encouraging growth across a range of sectors. For 2014, there were 2,160 vessel arrivals at Scrabster, an 11% increase on the previous year. The overall tonnage of vessels through the port was 8.109 million tonnes, an increase of 5% on the previous year. When ferry vessel tonnage is taken out of the equation, the non- ferry tonnage is at its second highest level in the past twenty five year period.

### 2. FERRY

Ferry passenger numbers for 2014 were up 4.43% to 120,692.

The Trust has been successful in securing Transport Scotland Accessibility Funding to improve access to the ferry terminal.

### 3. FISHING

There was a 35% increase in box landings in 2014, with a total of 307,603 boxes landed at the port.

### 4. OIL AND GAS

Oil and Gas vessel arrivals in 2014 were 23% higher than in 2013, with an encouraging increase in project mobilisations in addition to regular “hot shot” calls.

#### **5. OTHER CARGOES**

General cargoes increased by 27% in 2014 to 52,027 tonnes. Faroese fish cargo rose by 7.5% to 15,688 tonnes. Also Oil Tanker cargoes rose 37% to 31,455 tonnes.

#### **6. FORWARD LOOK**

The Port continues to be busy with the Strathy North Windfarm shipments. The first shipment was received in early February and the programme is expected to be complete in May. Extensive use is being made of the new Jubilee Quay and port laydown areas.

Dialogue is continuing with MeyGen and their appointed sub-contractor in preparation for the Phase 1a deployment in the Inner Sound.

The Oil Sector is currently adjusting to the oil price reduction and beginning to address rampant cost inflation. How this will affect exploration and production activity, particularly West of Shetland, is not yet clear. However the sector’s present difficulties may benefit Scrabster, who can offer competitive rates, fast turnaround and shorter steaming time than the North East.

The 2015 Scrabster Cruise Programme will comprise 5 vessel visits bringing 3,032 passengers. There are already nine vessels booked for 2016 bringing 4,796 passengers. The Trust will again exhibit at Seatrade Miami in March as part of Cruise Scotland.

The Trust is grateful to the Highland Council for the continued provision of courtesy buses for Cruise Visitors.

**28<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

# Appendix C

## **WICK HARBOUR REPORT FOR CTF, MARCH 2015**

**Fishing:** Activity continues as normal, mostly shellfish, with all landings consigned south by road.

**Cargoes:** Imported cargoes of coal, lime, road salt, towheads, steel pipe, and fertiliser, are expected to continue as normal. Export of timber from site clearances for local windfarms at Burn of Whilk and Stroupster has now been completed. In the year 2014 we had 51 major ship movements, the best for many years.

**Onshore Windfarms:** Three ships have recently delivered components for the Burn of Whilk Windfarm and a fourth is expected later this month to complete the works.

**Offshore Windfarms:** The two major offshore windfarms currently planned in the Moray Firth near Wick, (BOWL and MORL), are due to make their 'Final Investment Decisions' in December '15/January '16. Discussions are ongoing with the Developers on the required port infrastructure needed to provide an O&M base for at least the next twenty five years. MORL's recent setback in terms of government funding is expected to delay their development possibly by twelve months. Several vessels are now involved in work on the subsea HVDC connector from Wick to the Moray coast, and the recently installed MORL Met Mast, all making regular visits to the Harbour.

**Oil Related:** Recent activity at Subsea7 is reflected in increased imports of steel pipe and towheads, and shipping movements. Confirmed contracts through 2015/16 should continue this activity.

**Infrastructure:** Our Engineers have awarded a Dredging Contract for the River Basin and approaches, but the start has been postponed till the Spring for weather reasons. Hendersons have started work on repairs and a new wave wall at Shaltigoe, funded by the last tranche of storm damage repair monies from the Scottish government.

**Future Plans:** The business case for potential breakwater options, deep water berths and laydown areas, to expand the Harbour into Wick Bay, is currently being examined by our Business Consultants. 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 and service vessels.

Gordon Doull, Vice Chairman, WHA.  
March 2015