



Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

Date: 07/06/2021

Time: 10:00

Location: Virtual Meeting – held over Microsoft Teams

Present

David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (chair)
Fiona Levack	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (minutes)
Dave Calder	Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
Bill Mowat	Gills Harbour
Cllr Raymond Bremner	Highland Council
Cllr Willie Mackay	Highland Council
Dougie Cook	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd
David Cameron	Pentland Ferries
Derek Glasgow	ScotRail
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour
Kris Bevan	Serco NorthLink Ferries
William Mainus	Stagecoach in the Highlands
Davie Alexander	Thurso & Wick Trades Union Council
Alan McCabe	Transport Scotland Ferries
Marco Bardelli	Transport Scotland Roads

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:

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
June Love	Dounreay
Roger Saxon	Dounreay Stakeholder Group
Alex Macmanus	Highland Council
Cllr Matthew Reiss	Highland Council
Frank Roach	HITRANS
Kathryn Scollie	Pentland Ferries
David Beaton	Stagecoach in the Highlands
Ian Cormack	Wick Harbour
Malcolm Bremner	Wick Harbour

2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 11.03.2021

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

3. Review of actions from last meeting

CTF(2020)M003/A003 – *Peter Faccenda and Frank Roach to liaise on discussion of future rail opportunities* **COMPLETE**

Dave Calder gave a short presentation on hydrogen opportunities in the area, including work being done on future rail opportunities (**Appendix A**).

David Swanson noted it was positive to see so many positive initiatives underway, and noted that the Forum would be particularly interested to hear updates on the Georgemas Junction Hub and Wick Airport Community Energy Project as these progress.

CTF(2021)M001/A001 - *Forum to write to Paul Wheelhouse MSP regarding rollout of Road Equivalent Tariff* **COMPLETE**

David Swanson noted that this had been done and copies of the correspondence circulated to Forum members. He noted the Forum's ongoing frustration at the lack of progress on this matter, despite being reassured that it remains a Scottish Government priority.

Alan McCabe noted that Transport Scotland are also frustrated and are finding it difficult to get clarity from UK Government with regards to their legal position on subsidies. He noted that he is happy to continue to push on this from his side and will provide an update as soon as one is available.

Sandy Mackie agreed with David regarding frustration on the lack of progress and noted his concern that the response from Transport Scotland to the Forum's letter to the Minister seemed to represent a backwards step with regards to the legal position on RET rollout. He noted that this scheme was announced and promised in 2017 and now appears to be in doubt, and that the North Highlands and islands are now at a disadvantage compared to other areas of Scotland which have had RET in place for many years.

It was agreed that the Forum would write to the appropriate person within UK Government to ask that they clarify their legal position as a matter of urgency. Alan McCabe agreed to provide the relevant contact information to David Swanson to enable this.

CTF(2021)M002/A001 - *Forum to write to UK Government to seek clarity on legal position with regards to subsidies*

CTF(2021)M001/A002 - *Paul Flynn and Alan McCabe to update Forum on plans for group bookings on ferry services* **COMPLETE**

A written response was provided on this matter and this is summarised as follows:

- Due to the uncertainties surrounding Covid-19, group bookings are not yet being taken, however; this is continually under review
- The First Minister has announced a review of physical distancing will take place in the 3 weeks following 11th May – TS cannot pre-empt the outcome of this review to say what the future of physical distancing will be in coming months
- SNF engagement with Visit Scotland and analysis on the likely shape of the coach market for 2021 supported the initial decision to cancel provisional reservations.
- The Scottish Government have announced several funding initiatives to support both the coach operators and the hospitality and tourism sector as a whole during these challenging times.

David Swanson noted that the Scottish Government had reviewed COVID restrictions since this response was provided and asked Alan McCabe if he was able to provide any update on this.

Alan noted that group bookings were now being accepted provided that the tour operators had carried out risk assessments to the standards required by Scottish Government and obeyed all other relevant COVID regulations. Kris Bevan confirmed this and noted that group bookings which met these criteria had been accepted.

It was agreed that the Forum would now be kept updated on this matter as part of Serco NorthLink Ferries' regular updates.

CTF(2021)M001/A003 - *Paul Flynn to provide update on COVID-19 testing consultation with ports* **COMPLETE**

A written response was provided on this matter and this is summarised as follows:

With regards to this specific point it is now self-testing rather than any testing in ports so there is no role for ports or operators other than to promote the wider messaging around self-testing before travelling to islands.

To reduce the risk of coronavirus being brought into island communities by people unaware they are infectious, the Scottish Government is encouraging anyone planning to travel to a Scottish island to test before they do so. This is a voluntary scheme and travellers will not need evidence of a negative test to travel to a Scottish island. However, we encourage everyone to participate in order to reduce the risk of inadvertently carrying coronavirus into island communities.

The Scottish Government recommends that travellers test three days before they plan to travel and then again on the day of departure. This allows anyone testing positive to self-isolate before beginning their journey. Rapid lateral flow tests can be ordered via the Scottish Government and NorthLink websites for delivery to your home anywhere in the UK, and should arrive within 24-48 hours.

CTF(2021)M001/A004 - *Forum to write to Michael Matheson MSP with regards to funding for local authority roads* **COMPLETE**

This was done and relevant correspondence circulated to the Forum members.

David Swanson noted that there was again no Highland Council roads representative present and that no written update had been provided, and expressed concern that the Forum was not receiving the necessary updates to enable it to work on issues such as this and understand what is happening in the area. He noted his disappointment at the lack of engagement from the Council in this area.

Cllr Bremner noted that this meeting of the Forum clashed with a Ward Business Meeting but that this is no excuse for a written update not to be provided. Cllr Bremner noted that there is a lot of work being done – there is a monthly roads meeting and the Councillors get updates on progress of works at that. He noted that the main problem is not only identifying the amount of money needed for capital infrastructure but ensuring that it is implemented in that year.

Cllr Bremner updated the Forum that there is an extra £10m in roads funding this year and a further £10m next year, which means that the budget for Caithness has gone from around £600,000 to at least £1.2m this year. There is also a roads strategy meeting at Highland Council at the redesign board level – Cllr Bremner noted that he is more than happy to come back to the Forum with the information needed with regards to Council roads.

CTF(2021)M002/A002 - *Cllr Raymond Bremner to provide update on Highland Council roads to the Forum*

Cllr Bremner noted that there may be a need for the Highland Council itself to refocus where it is putting its capital investment and that other areas of the Council's service delivery programme have been shored up at the expense of the roads infrastructure programme.

Mike Lunan asked if another meeting of the Forum could be arranged within a couple of weeks so that this update could be delivered and discussed. David noted this would not be likely. Cllr Bremner noted that he would be happy for David to attend the next monthly Council roads meeting and feed back to the Forum following that.

CTF(2021)M002/A003 - *David Swanson to attend Highland Council roads meeting and feed back to Forum*

Marco Bardelli noted that within the Cabinet, Michael Matheson's remit has expanded to include net zero and that Graeme Dey as Minister for Transport has direct responsibility for roads matters. Cllr Bremner noted that he knows Graeme Dey and would be happy to invite him to attend a meeting of the Forum.

CTF(2021)M002/A004 - *Cllr Raymond Bremner to invite Graeme Dey to attend a meeting of the Forum*

CTF(2021)M001/A005 - *Marco to come back to Forum with timescale for looking at drainage options at A9 at Scrabster* **COMPLETE**

Marco provided a brief update on this, noting that the report on the Scrabster slope is being considered by a geotechnical specialist colleague within the special projects team in Transport Scotland roads maintenance. No feedback has yet been given but Marco noted that he expects to discuss drainage options with them in the coming weeks.

David Swanson asked Marco to keep the Forum updated as these discussions progress.

CTF(2021)M001/A006 - *Chamber to put out press release on roads issues and PSO on behalf of Forum* **COMPLETE**

This was done.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 There were no matters arising

5. Transport Updates

5.1 Scrabster Harbour

5.1.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix B**). Sandy Mackie covered some of the key points in the report in a verbal update to the Forum.

5.1.2 Sandy noted that the harbour has seen a significant loss of revenue due to COVID travel restrictions. With regards the Ola Pier project, RJ McLeod have been on site for a year and the job is progressing well. Around £14.5m has been spent to date and a large local/Highland supply chain has been used. The project has progressed through COVID restrictions and should be complete by early October.

- 5.1.3 With regards to concern over the position on the cruise sector in Scotland, Sandy noted that domestic cruise has been able to restart from 17 May in England, but that the latest update from Scottish Government is that there will be a review in June, and that there has already been a loss in bookings as far ahead as August. These cruises will only be for UK passengers and many cruise lines are imposing additional restrictions as well as requiring PCR testing. Sandy noted that the hope is for the review to take place in early June as it takes time to get ships mobilised, so the later the review the greater the chance of further cancellations.
- 5.1.4 David Swanson asked that Sandy keep the Forum updated as to the Scottish Government review and noted that if the outcome of that is not what is hoped for then the Forum can decide to take further action at that stage.
- 5.1.5 Sandy noted that the Trust continues to progress its application to become a Border Control Post and that they are expecting some feedback from Defra regarding the latest stage of the application process within the next week.

5.2 Wick Harbour

- 5.2.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix C**).
- 5.2.2 David Swanson noted his hopes that Wick would win the tender to host the operations and maintenance base for the Moray West offshore windfarm – he noted the benefits that the Beatrice O&M base had brought and that it would be good to see more offshore renewables work coming to the harbour.
- 5.2.3 With regards to the point in the written update regarding the local supply chain for offshore wind, David noted that the Chamber is working on an offshore wind directory to showcase what the local supply chain has to offer.

5.3 Gills Harbour

- 5.3.1 Bill Mowat gave an update on behalf of Gills Harbour. Of note:
- This has been a tough time for the harbour with COVID restrictions etc.
 - He had an informal meeting recently with Andrew Banks of Pentland Ferries and things are picking up which is positive
- 5.3.2 Bill emphasised to the Forum his belief that hydrogen is the way forward for Gills Harbour, and that we should ensure as much onshore wind generation as possible is used to generate hydrogen.

5.4 Pentland Ferries

5.4.1 David Cameron gave an update on behalf of Pentland Ferries. Of note:

- Passenger numbers are at around 75% of where they were in 2019
- Large numbers of bookings are now coming in, with most booking just 2-3 days in advance of travel
- Group tours are being taken provided risk assessments are in place – a huge number of coach tour bookings have already been taken for 2022
- Pentland Ferries are operating three sailings per day – these are relatively quiet during the week and busy at the weekend
- Freight volumes are up significantly by comparison to 2019 figures

5.5 Serco NorthLink Ferries

5.5.1 Kris Bevan provided an update to the Forum on behalf of Serco NorthLink Ferries. Of note:

- 1 Jan-31 May across the network, passenger numbers are up 10%, non-commercial vehicle traffic is up 45% and freight 20% by comparison to the same period in 2020
- Looking at the Pentland Firth in more detail, particularly period 5, passenger carryings are up over 1000% compared to the same period in 2020 but this is not an ideal comparison due to the impact of COVID restrictions in 2020. Comparing to 2019, passenger volumes are at approximately half the level they were
- The *Hamnavoe* is operating three sailings a day from 17 May through to the start of August
- Capacity is still reduced by around 50% on the *Hamnavoe* due to the ongoing requirements for physical distancing. Some onboard services have been able to reopen in line with the easing of restrictions
- NorthLink Ferries' 2021 marketing campaign has launched, including TV advertising

5.6 ScotRail Alliance

5.6.1 Two written updates were provided, on the May 2021 timetable changes (**Appendix D**) and Line of Route Performance Profile (**Appendix E**). Derek Glasgow also gave an update to the Forum. Of note:

- ScotRail is still under Scottish Emergency Funding until likely March 2022
- There may be some disruption to services on Sundays throughout June due to a strike by conductors and ticket examiners. Most services on the Far North Line will likely still run, but from June some services may be cancelled
- From May 2021 the Far North Line has four journeys per day in each direction

- Performance over the last 6-7 weeks has been hit due to three engine faults, which is quite unusual for the Far North Line. A track defect also resulted in a 20mph speed limit and variation in temperatures can also cause speed restrictions to be put in place, however across the business PPM is still high
- Passenger numbers are starting to recover, especially at the weekends

5.6.2 David Swanson asked Derek if he was able to update on any of the improvement projects discussed at the previous meeting. Derek noted that these are all in progress and that linespeed improvements have added robustness to the existing timetable. Some construction is starting on various works on the line. With regards to the Lentrans Loop this is under consultation – the next step is to choose a position for the loop after which things will move to delivery stage.

5.7 Direct Rail Services

5.7.1 David Swanson noted that representatives from the Forum and the Dounreay Stakeholder Group had attended a commercial trial at Georgemas Junction, and that concerns had subsequently been raised regarding this. It was noted that the process appeared to be more time and labour-intensive than at other commercial freight terminals. David noted that the Forum had written to Direct Rail Services/Nuclear Transport Solutions on this matter and that they hoped to arrange a meeting with Chris Connelly to discuss further – interested members from the CTF and DSG would be notified.

5.7.2 Davie Alexander noted his agreement with this and that if the terminal could not be used for commercial freight, it was still important to find a future use for it to ensure a future benefit to the region.

5.7.3 David noted the presentation given by Dave Calder with regards to future rail/hydrogen opportunities and whether Georgemas might have a role to play in these.

5.8 Highland Council Roads

5.8.1 No attendee was present and no written update provided – Cllr Raymond Bremner to seek a written update as discussed under **M001/A004**.

5.9 BEAR Scotland / Transport Scotland

5.9.1 An update on BEAR's programme of works was provided (**Appendix F**). Marco Bardelli also delivered a brief update to the Forum. Of note:

- Following the winter review there have been significant changes to the programme of works compared to the draft shared at the last meeting.
- A new speed limit of 40mph will be introduced at Latheron, along with bus stop and footway improvements. A final decision is awaited on a limit of 50mph to be introduced in Latheronwheel.

- New signage has been introduced at Latheron, which now includes the Gills Bay Ferry. Marco will liaise with Highland Council's roads team to see if their signage can also be updated where the route passes off trunk roads and onto the local authority road network.
- 5.9.2 Cllr Bremner queried with Marco if BEAR had a new manager for the region. Marco confirmed that the area manager is now Colin Watson, based out of the Perth office.
- 5.9.3 There was some discussion of the continued policy regarding working at home. Cllr Bremner noted that communities need to see BEAR out and about to give confidence that issues are being addressed. Marco noted that while he is still working from home, BEAR have had teams working on the network since June of last year and that he receives regular updates from them with regards to their inspections of the network and recommendations for action. He noted BEAR's experience in these matters and that he trusted their judgement.
- 5.9.4 Cllr Bremner queried how Transport Scotland divide works up between capital and revenue - he noted that he has started to see some minor deterioration in the road network. He queried how Transport Scotland are addressing these via revenue fixes before they become capital fixes.
- 5.9.5 Marco noted that Transport Scotland do have both capital and revenue spend, although the terms they use tend to be structural maintenance for deeper interventions as opposed to patching and resurfacing for more surface-level improvements. Marco noted Transport Scotland's preference to go more with structural renewals as that has a better overall value for money.
- 5.9.6 Davie Alexander noted the significant amount of rubbish at the side of the roads and enquired as to plans to clear this and who is responsible for doing so. Marco noted that this is the responsibility of the local authority but that Transport Scotland/BEAR do try to share their programme with local authorities to make this easier so that litter picking can be done e.g. in advance of grass cutting activities. He noted that this is a high-risk activity for those who have to work alongside trunk roads collecting litter.
- 5.9.7 There was some discussion that the issue of litter is a societal problem as well. David Swanson noted VisitScotland's recent campaigns on the matter and the hope that these would show positive results.

5.10 Stagecoach

5.10.1 William Mainus gave an update on behalf of Stagecoach. Of note:

- Passenger numbers are down around 40% and concession holders around 60% on 2019 figures. There are some signs that these numbers are starting to recover.
- Mileage is down around 14% on 2019 and there are no plans at present to reintroduce more mileage, beyond deciding at what point the second X99 on Saturday is returned to service.

- Funding has been received from a local windfarm to run a service Dunbeath-Wick three times daily during the school holidays.

5.10.2 David Swanson noted the most recent COVID-19 Public Attitudes Survey, which stated that most passengers look to guidance from Scottish Government as the main factor in when they will return to using public transport more often. He noted the importance of Scottish Government getting that messaging right and queried with William whether the numbers Stagecoach are seeing match up with the attitudes from the survey.

5.10.3 William noted that Highland is unique in some ways, especially in Caithness as it does not have the same high volumes of commuter usage, so has in some ways been insulated from changes seen elsewhere in Scotland. He noted that Stagecoach are adapting the business to the new way of working.

5.10.4 Bill Mowat noted that a large number of new buses had been introduced in Orkney recently and queried whether there were any plans for similar introductions into the Caithness fleet.

5.10.5 William noted that the investment in Orkney was the result of Stagecoach winning a long-term contract which enabled them to make that investment in their fleet in the area. He noted that Highland Council are looking to extend their tenders across Highland for 12 months which, while welcome, is relatively short-term and does not enable a similar investment to be made.

5.10.6 Bill Mowat queried what was happening with the Caithness Bus Users Group. David Swanson noted that it had been agreed that the Association of Caithness Community Councils was the appropriate venue for liaison between Stagecoach and communities, with the local community councils acting to feed back to the Association.

5.10.7 Cllr Bremner noted that he had updated Cllr Nicola Sinclair on this and that this information would be cascaded to community councils. With regards to the Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council, Cllr Bremner noted that the Community Council would be happy for Stagecoach to attend their next meeting.

5.10.8 Davie Alexander asked if William was aware of the national campaign to take bus services back under local government control. William noted that he was aware of the campaign but did not feel it was his place to discuss it beyond that. There was some discussion of the different models of bus service operation and the need to get the balance right for the needs of rural areas.

5.11 Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL

5.11.1 A written update was provided on behalf of HIAL (**Appendix G**). Dougie Cook gave a brief update to the Forum on behalf of HIAL. Of note:

- With regards to the PSO, discussion is ongoing on this on a regular basis and progress being made. Dougie is meeting soon with the procurement team at Highland Council and the aim remains to get some scheduled services in place later this year. This is felt to be achievable but timelines will be tight due to the tender process

- COVID-19 operations – the regional aviation sector is slowly restarting. Figures across the group are improving, but slowly
- Passenger numbers for the group as a whole are up on last April, for Wick they are down but this is due to Wick servicing an unusually high volume of oil and gas traffic in April 2020. Although passenger numbers have decreased, aircraft movements for May have increased.
- HIAL continues to carry out infrastructural upgrades at Wick including to surface water drainage, the terminal building and the heating system. It looks like Wick will be the first in the HIAL group to use some form of renewable or environmentally-friendly heating
- There are lots of exciting developments happening with the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE), a small portion of which will come to Wick. Infrastructure upgrades including to allow electric aircraft charging are now in position – Ampaire will be operating an electric aircraft between Wick and Kirkwall over the summer

5.11.2 On SATE, David Swanson noted that he had been having some discussions with Rory Black at HIAL regarding a freight-focused aspect of this.

6. Press Communications

- 6.1 There was some discussion as to whether a press release should be issued on any of the areas discussed. Cllr Bremner noted the works at Whitechapel Rd in Wick and that the Forum and Council had been involved in initial discussions around these works.
- 6.2 David Swanson noted that while this was a good news story, it was more for HITRANS to lead on promoting it. He agreed to liaise with HITRANS on any PR they are doing around the project to ensure this is promoted locally.

CTF(2021)M002/A005 - *David Swanson to liaise with HITRANS on PR around Whitechapel Rd works*

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 Marco Bardelli noted that signage for the North Coast 500 was complete, and that this had involved joint working with Highland Council.
- 7.2 Alan McCabe noted that with regards to COVID testing prior to travel, test kits are available from both the Scottish Government and the NorthLink Ferries websites.

8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 It was noted that this would likely be scheduled for September 2021, and that David Swanson would liaise with Alex Macmanus at Highland Council to avoid any diary clashes.

9. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

No ongoing actions

10. Actions arising from this meeting

CTF(2021)M002/A001 - *Forum to write to UK Government to seek clarity on legal position with regards to subsidies*

CTF(2021)M002/A002 - *Cllr Raymond Bremner to provide update on Highland Council roads to the Forum*

CTF(2021)M002/A003 - *David Swanson to attend Highland Council roads meeting and feed back*

CTF(2021)M002/A004 - *Cllr Raymond Bremner to invite Graeme Dey to attend a meeting of the Forum*

CTF(2021)M002/A005 - *David Swanson to liaise with HITRANS on PR around Whitechapel Rd works*

Appendix A – CNSRP Presentation

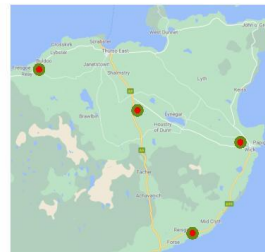
CNSRP Hydrogen Opportunities

Caithness Transport Forum
Dave Calder
7 June 2021



CNSRP Hydrogen Opportunities

- ▶ Four stands of activity enabling transformation to a new distributed green energy model supporting transportation
 - ▶ NDA/DSRL Decarbonisation Plan
 - ▶ 2023 Carbon Management Plans including use of renewable energy
 - ▶ 2025 low carbon heat integration plan
 - ▶ 2030 transition to battery or ULEV for light and heavy vehicles
 - ▶ Georgemas Junction Hub
 - ▶ ZET Project Trials and Beyond
 - ▶ Feasibility Study Funding Application Submitted in May
 - ▶ Wick Airport Community Energy Project
 - ▶ producing Hydrogen to decarbonise airport operations and public transportation and supplying community heating through the gas network.
 - ▶ Lybster Energy Hub
 - ▶ Tech-Terra proposing repurposing oil & gas asset for Blue Hydrogen and future proofing to Green Hydrogen Production
 - ▶ Test Bed for CCS Technology
 - ▶ ERI Energy Demand Study for the CNSRP Area due July



Appendix B – Scrabster Harbour Trust



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 7th June 2021

SCRABSTER HARBOUR UPDATE

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. PORT ACTIVITY

The Trust's trading year 2020/21 ended on 31st March 2021. The port revenues were impacted by Covid-19, particularly the associated travel restrictions.

Overall, the position for the full year was similar to that reported to the last forum meeting. Total revenues were £858,000 lower than the previous year. The majority of the decrease arising from reduced ferry traffic and there being no 2020 cruise season.

The main activity points were as follows:

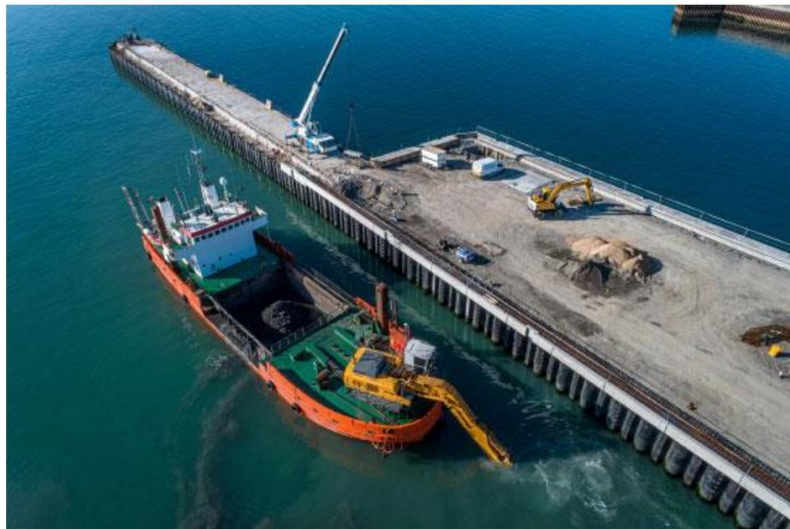
- Total vessel arrivals for 2020-21 numbered 2,064, a fall of 7% on the previous year.
- The total vessel tonnage amounted to 7.945 million tonnes, 5% lower than the prior year.
- Ferry passenger number totalled 47,100, a decline of 70% on the previous year.
- Fish box landings amounted to 267,796, 4.5% down on last year.
- Energy related traffic (Oil & Gas plus renewables) arrivals were down 21% and vessel tonnage down 24%.

- General cargo tonnage amounted to 47,887 tonnes, a similar level to 2019/20 and reflected the continued timber shipments through the port.
- Fish cargo tonnage amounted to 18,196 tonnes, a 2.5% increase on last year.
- The volume of fuel delivered by oil tanker to the port was 41,199 tonnes, an increase of 7.5% on last year.

2. OLA PIER DEVELOPMENT

The contractor, RJ McLeod, has now been on site for just under a year. The project continues to progress well in terms of time, cost, and quality.

- The piling works are now complete with 160 tubular piles and 226 sheet piles installed.
- Over 60,000 tonnes of local aggregate have been imported to fill the new quay structure.
- The dredging works are underway and approximately 50% complete. A total of 110,000 m³ of seabed material will be removed to allow larger vessels to berth on the redeveloped pier.



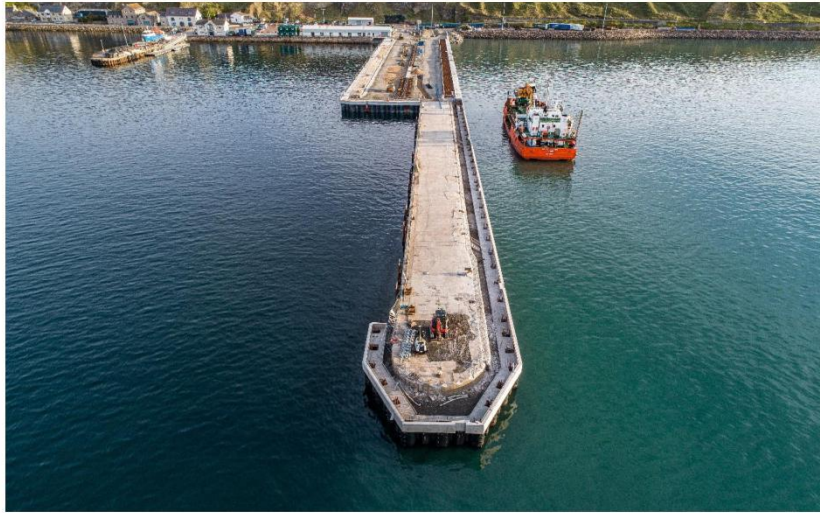
- Work is underway on the new concrete deck with a total of 3,000 cubic metres of concrete to be poured.
- The forecast completion date for the project is 8th October 2021.

3. OTHER MATTERS

- With the easing of travel restrictions, there has been a welcome increase in ferry traffic numbers.
- Whilst domestic cruise has restarted in England and will resume shortly in Northern Ireland, the green light for restart in Scotland is still awaited. The continued uncertainty has caused some lines to cancel bookings over the coming months.

When cruise resumes it is likely to be heavily regulated with cruise passengers only allowed to take organised tours. The tours are likely to be panoramic ones with the only stops being rest stops. Independent tours and exploration of the locality will not be allowed for the initial vessel calls.

- The Trust continues to progress its application for Border Control Post status.



1st June 2021

Appendix C – Wick Harbour Authority



Wick Harbour

Business update - Caithness Transport forum - May 21

Overview

- Wick Harbour, in common with all other businesses in the area has seen the adverse effects of the Covid pandemic affect its income. As restrictions slowly relax, we hope to see a gradual increase in business, back to more normal levels in all sectors. It will take time for business to return to pre-covid levels, however, the medium to long term outlook for the port remains exciting due to the expansion of offshore wind.

Offshore wind

- Beatrice Offshore Windfarm continues apace with its O&M. Again, Covid has affected their business, with reduced numbers of technicians allowed to travel on the CTV's transporting them to the windfarm. Another effect of the pandemic was the postponement of BOWL's 2020 Summer Campaign, which also contributed to a downturn in harbour income. It is planned that a campaign will materialise this summer, albeit at a somewhat reduced scale.
- Moray East windfarm continues under construction and we have seen some CTV activity from this project, although in relatively low numbers. Moray West windfarm is likely to get underway in 2023 and it is hoped we will see increased business opportunities on this project, due to our proximity to the windfarm. The Moray West decision on where to locate their O&M base is due to be announced over the coming weeks, and Wick has tendered to host this facility, which if successful, would give a significant jobs boost to the Caithness economy.

- Looking ahead, the Crown Estate is in the process of granting leases for the next round of offshore windfarms, quite a few of which are located off the Caithness Coast, which Wick will undoubtedly look to benefit from. Already we have received numerous enquiries from prospective developers, and we have also held initial meetings with some of the multi-national companies looking to be involved. This provides confidence that Wick will have a long-term future in this fast-developing industry, and it is hoped that this would also benefit all areas of Caithness, both in jobs and business opportunities. A key point raised by developers in our discussions is the ability for them to have access to a strong locally based supply chain. Caithness can offer a wide range of skills and services and this is something we actively promote in all our meetings with potential clients.

Cargoes

- Cargoes are at this time forecast to be at a reduced level in 2021, due to the downturn in Subsea 7's activities at Wester, meaning there will be no pipe or Towhead activities this year. Also, no onshore windfarm shipments are due during 2021, but we continue to see our normal shipments of lime, salt, fuel oil etc.

Fishing

- Fish & shellfish landings have been affected by both the Brexit withdrawal and the Covid pandemic. Although showing signs of some stabilisation, landings, especially shellfish, remain at a lower level than usual. Many fishermen have turned to the local market to sell some of their catch due to export difficulties and where this has helped them keep their businesses alive, it is no substitute from their normal markets which have become so unpredictable.

Leisure

The marina is open to welcome visitors once again and we have seen a slow but welcome increase in the leisure market. It is very unlikely that we will be hosting foreign vessels this year, but it is hoped we may see an increase from UK vessels as more of the yachting fraternity will be travelling around the UK coast than would normally be the case.

Locally, marina users have been getting their vessels trimmed up for the summer season and the marina is gradually filling up,

High Water Protection Gate

- This project is now with funding agencies for consideration. It has also the backing of Highland Council, who have put it forward as a part of their Levelling Up Funding bid being distributed by the UK Government.

The HWPG is integral to any expansion of Wick Harbour facilities. It would provide safe, all year berthing for up to 20 CTV/ Survey type vessels and fulfils the UK Governments programme of increasing port capacity to accommodate vessels contracted to the renewable industry. Failure to secure funding will undoubtedly hit job prospects for Caithness in the offshore wind sector and any support we can get from local businesses & agencies would be most welcome.

Appendix D – ScotRail May 2021 Timetable Changes

NB only pages relating to the Far North Line and the Highland Main Line have been included

ScotRail May 2021 Timetable Change – Stakeholder Summary

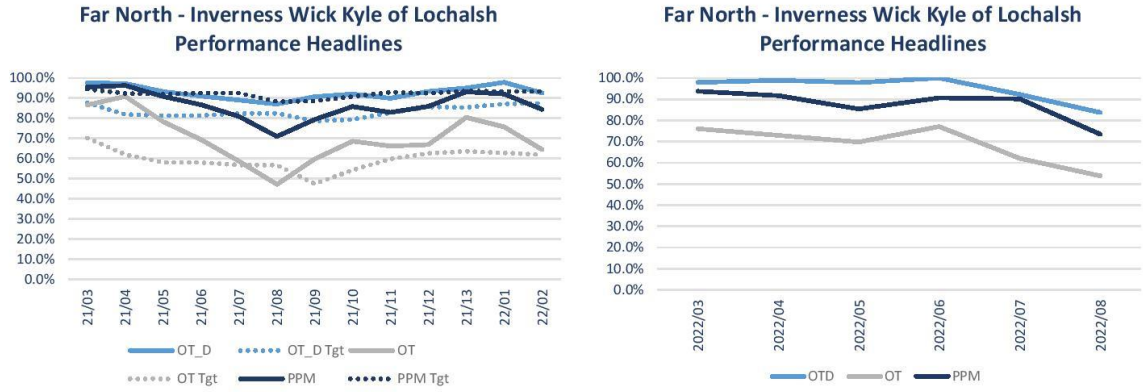
30th April 2021

Route	Level of service	Change from current timetable
Edinburgh and Glasgow to Dundee and Arbroath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One train per hour between Arbroath and Dundee all day, with day time services extended to Edinburgh or Glasgow. One train per hour between Dundee and Edinburgh; Four trains per day from Dundee to Glasgow and six per day from Glasgow to Dundee; and Last trains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22:38 from Dundee to Arbroath; 23:06 from Edinburgh to Dundee; and 23:09 from Glasgow to Dundee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of evening service and later last trains.
Edinburgh and Glasgow to Inverness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight trains from Inverness to Edinburgh or Glasgow, departing between 06:48 and 20:15; Ten trains from Edinburgh or Glasgow to Inverness, arriving between 10:28 and 23:16; 05:03 from Perth to Inverness; and 05:36 from Inverness to Perth, which on Saturdays continues to Edinburgh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of later last trains; The 18:52 Inverness to Edinburgh on a Sunday will now leave Perth at 21:08 instead of 21:12. The connection into the last service to Glasgow at Perth has been maintained, and this service now departs Perth at 21:15; and The 22:48 Perth to Edinburgh service will now operate via Kirkcaldy instead of Dunfermline Monday to Saturday. This train will call at Ladybank, Markinch, Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn, Burntisland, Aberdour, Dalgety Bay, Inverkeithing, Haymarket and Edinburgh. This gives a journey time reduction between Perth and Edinburgh of 20 minutes on a Saturday, and 17 minutes Monday to Friday.
Edinburgh and Glasgow to Aberdeen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One train every two hours between Glasgow and Aberdeen; and One train every two hours between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of evening service and later last trains. An additional 16:45 from Aberdeen to Dundee will operate Monday to Saturday, calling at at Portlethen, Stonehaven, Laurencekirk, Montrose, Arbroath, Carnoustie, and Broughty Ferry, to improve the evening peak service from Aberdeen. To maintain a connection at Perth for Edinburgh on a Sunday, the 19:34 from Aberdeen to Glasgow service will now depart at 19:30 and runs earlier between Aberdeen and Perth.
Montrose to Inverurie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One train every hour between Montrose and Inverurie, with additional services between Montrose, Stonehaven and Aberdeen in peak periods; Additional services between Inverurie and Aberdeen to give an overall service of three trains per hour in peak periods, two trains per hour during the day, and one train per hour in the evenings; and Last trains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22:26 from Aberdeen to Perth (Monday to Thursday, Saturday); 22:49 from Aberdeen to Inverurie; and 23:23 from Aberdeen to Perth (Friday). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional peak services; Restoration of evening service and later last trains; and An additional 16:45 from Aberdeen to Dundee will operate Monday to Saturday, calling at at Portlethen, Stonehaven, Laurencekirk, Montrose, Arbroath, Carnoustie, and Broughty Ferry, to improve the evening peak service from Aberdeen.

Route	Level of service	Change from current timetable
Aberdeen to Inverness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty two services per day between Aberdeen and Inverness; and • Six additional services per day between Elgin and Inverness to provide additional morning and evening peak services, along with a day time return to improve the service for shoppers, and an additional evening service. • Last trains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 21:33 from Inverness to Aberdeen; and ○ 21:56 from Aberdeen to Inverness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of later last trains.
Far North Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four return trains per day between Inverness and Kyle of Lochalsh; • Four return trains per day between Inverness and Wick' • Additional morning and evening peak services between Lairg, Ardgay and Inverness; • Last train: 21:06 Inverness to Tain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional trains between Inverness and Wick; • Additional late train between Inverness and Tain.

Appendix E – ScotRail Far North Line Performance

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 I	Canc
18/05/21	GGJ HMS	GGJ HMS 20MPH ESR S/L	TRACK FLT	NETWORK RAIL	7	0
25/05/21	GVE	2H81 ENGINE FAULT GVE	BELOW SBAR	TOC ON SELF	6	1
04/05/21	IGD WCK	INV RETB FLR IGD WCK	RADIO FLR	NETWORK RAIL	5	0
21/05/21	INV DIN	2H63 4 LOST INV DIN	BELOW SBAR	TOC ON SELF	4	0
20/05/21	DIN IGD	DIN IGD 30 ESR S/L	TRACK FLT	NETWORK RAIL	3	0
20/05/21	INV DIN	INV DIN 30 ESR S/L	TRACK FLT	NETWORK RAIL	2	0
14/05/21	DINGWALL	2H85 ENGINE DEFECT GVE	BELOW SBAR	TOC ON SELF	2	2
03/05/21	BRA LRG	2H60 3 LOST BRA LRG	NOCAUSE ID	NETWORK RAIL	2	0
23/04/21	INVERNESS	INV IS181 PTS FLR	POINTS FLR	NETWORK RAIL	2	0
24/05/21	DIN	2H85 WATER INGRESS DIN	FLEET NFF	TOC ON SELF	2	0

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

Top 10 Causes over the past 6 Weeks

	Inc	PPMf	Canc
BELOW SBAR	5	14	6
TRACK FLT	14	13	0
NOCAUSE ID	32	9	0
DRIVER	26	7	0
RADIO FLR	5	7	1
TOC UNEX	12	5	0
LEVEL XING	9	4	0
POINTS FLR	4	3	0
FLEET NFF	1	2	0
DIESL LOCO	1	2	0

Key Location Headline Stats

Location	OT_D	OT	PPM
MUIROFORD	50.0%	44.4%	44.4%
ROGART	28.6%	0.0%	76.9%
FORSINARD	26.3%	23.8%	76.2%
GARVE	57.3%	68.1%	90.4%
ARDGAY	64.6%	48.4%	84.2%
WICK	97.8%	47.9%	74.0%
KYLEOFLOC	96.5%	69.2%	86.7%
THURSO	47.0%	51.1%	81.9%
HELMSDALE	32.8%	40.0%	73.7%
LAIRG	34.6%	38.0%	75.0%
GEORGMASJ	48.5%	56.5%	80.7%
BRORA	30.4%	30.7%	70.8%
ACHNASHEN	66.9%	74.3%	93.1%
STRCARRON	75.4%	82.6%	94.1%
TAIN	40.0%	46.8%	81.6%
FEARN	33.6%	45.4%	80.8%
INVERGRDN	38.6%	53.9%	81.7%
INVERNESS	93.3%	75.3%	89.7%
DINGWALL	62.1%	69.4%	90.1%

Appendix F – BEAR Programme of Works

NW Trunk Road Unit Caithness and Sutherland		BEAR Scotland Works Programme 2021/22 (May21 update)				
Route	Scheme Name	Work Description	Start	Finish	Status	Value £
A9	A9 South of Dunbeath Resurfacing	Resurfacing	10/03/2022	18/03/2022	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 South of Berriedale Snow Gate	Patching	01/11/2021	02/11/2021	Not Started	50,000
A9	A9 Doll North	Patching	21/03/2022	21/03/2022	Not Started	50,000
A9	A9 South of Berriedale Snow Gate	Patching	01/11/2021	02/11/2021	Not Started	50,000
A99	A99 Lybster Resurfacing	Resurfacing	03/11/2021	10/11/2021	Not Started	160,000
A9	A9 Helmsdale North	Resurfacing	14/03/2022	18/03/2022	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 South of Latheronwheel	Resurfacing	30/11/2021	02/12/2021	Not Started	60,000
A9	A9 Golspie South	Resurfacing	18/10/2021	22/10/2021	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 South of Drummuie	Resurfacing	04/10/2021	15/10/2021	Not Started	200,000
A9	A9 Culmaily	Resurfacing	04/11/2021	12/11/2021	Not Started	200,000
A9	A9 North of Ramsbraigs	Resurfacing	11/11/2021	17/11/2021	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 Spittal Windfarm	Resurfacing	18/11/2021	29/11/2021	Not Started	200,000
A9	A9 Knockinnon	Resurfacing	16/02/2022	22/02/2022	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 Inver	Resurfacing	23/02/2022	01/03/2022	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 North of Caithness Boundary	Resurfacing	02/03/2022	08/03/2022	Not Started	100,000
A9	A9 Ousdale Farm	Patching	09/03/2022	09/03/2022	Not Started	50,000
A9	A9 South of Brora	Patching	23/03/2022	24/03/2022	Not Started	50,000

A9	A9 Brora	Footway Improvements	14/12/2020	04/06/2021	On Site	50,000
A9	A9 North Route Priority Roadmarking and Studding	Roadmarking and Studding	19/04/2021	TBC	Not Started	125,000
A9	A9 Dornoch to Latheron Sign Replacement	Signing	03/05/2021	TBC	Not Started	30,000
A9	A9 Cambusavie Drainage	Drainage Improvements	07/06/2021	TBC	Not Started	15,000
A99	A99 Lybster Kiosk Footway	Footway Improvements	12/07/2021	TBC	Not Started	40,000
A99	A99 Whiterow to Wick - Filter Drains	Drainage Improvements	02/08/2021	TBC	Not Started	50,000
A9	A9 Thurso Bridgend Drainage	Drainage Improvements	06/09/2021	TBC	Not Started	15,000
A9	A9 Dunrobin Retaining Wall	Repairs to Retaining Wall	04/10/2021	TBC	Not Started	10,000
A9	A9 Latheron - Thurso Signing Improvements	Signing	01/11/2021	TBC	Not Started	30,000
A99	A99 Route Priority Signing Improvements	Signing	06/12/2021	TBC	Not Started	20,000

Appendix G – Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL



Caithness transport forum update June 2021.

PSO

HIAL forms part of the PSO subcommittee and continues to engage with the stakeholders and partners. It is hoped to have some services restored before the end of the year.

COVID-19 Operations

HIAL continues to follow Scottish Government guidance, General Aviation and Out of Hours flights have now been re-instated.

HIAL continues to have staff working from home and to take advantage of the furlough scheme.

For those who cannot work from home social distancing in the workplace, PPE and enhanced cleaning regimes have been in place since the outbreak.

HIAL has purchased an Electrostatic ‘fogging machine’ which further enhances the cleaning regime.

In addition to the Scottish Government guidance on area levels HIAL continues to publish Airport COVID states as part of the contingency plans to maintain operations.

Wick JOG Airport is currently COVID State 0 – no staffing issues

Aircraft Movements

The aviation industry has started to open up again regionally and increased schedules are now in operation throughout the group. Although airline operations are nowhere near 2019 levels it is an encouraging positive trend.

HIAL Group stats below:

Passengers

April total passengers for the group were 32,713, an increase of 494% on last April.

Aircraft Movements

April total aircraft movements were 6,692, an increase of 215% on last April.

These figures illustrate the impact of COVID on 2020 figures

Statistics for Wick JOG:

Passengers

April total passengers 161, which is down 75% on last April.

Wick serviced an unusually high share of the Oil and Gas traffic last April and this elevated the figures.

Aircraft Movements

April total aircraft movements were 202 which is down 20% on last April.

Again mainly attributed to a reduction in Oil and Gas related traffic the year.

Figures for May provisionally look much more encouraging for aircraft movements.

Projects

As detailed in the last update HIA continues to carry out capital projects. Planned for this financial year.

- Continued improvements to the surface water drainage, we have entered into a partnership with UHI Thurso College, Environmental Research Institute (ERI) to carry out a study of the water runoff.
- Replacement of the oil fuelled heating and hot water boilers.
- Upgrades to runway drain covers
- Terminal building refurbishment

Staffing levels

Security is at full complement staff on furlough and a minimum amount of staff at the airport for day to day tasks and competency training.

ATC staffing is now at 4, our SATCO has revalidated as of April 21st

Our trainee ATCO has returned to a full training programme and has a CAA validation date scheduled for August.

The Airport Fire Service continue to utilise the flexible furlough with members of the team rotating.

Opening hours

The airfield is now operating increased hours although not yet at pre-COVID levels and continues to hold regular meetings with the Oil and Gas sector, FNA and BOWL.

The 24/7 cover for emergency flights remains unchanged.

Reduction in Rescue and Firefighting Services (RFFS)

HIAL have put this application to the CAA to reduce the RFFS category from 4 to 3 on hold, and have utilised a temporary dispensation.

Whilst Category 3 will accommodate the aircraft currently using the airport with provision in place for operators to request a higher category when needed, it was felt that until the outcome of the PSO tender was finalised no permanent changes should be made.

Brexit / HMRC

Following correspondence from HMRC it has been confirmed that there will be no material change to the current rules around ferry flights.

The implementation of the new rules has been postponed until January 2022.

HIAL is currently assessing the impact of Brexit on our supply chain.

Airfield Advisory Fund

We have received the report and recommendations from the Airfield advisory fund and will share with the airport stakeholders in due course.