



# Minutes of the Caithness Transport Forum

**Date:** 15/11/2022

**Time:** 10:30

**Location:** Naver Business Centre, Naver Road, Thurso / Microsoft Teams

## Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (chair)
Emma Gordon	Caithness Chamber of Commerce (minutes)
Laura O’Kane	Caithness Chamber of Commerce
Peter Faccenda	Caithness & Sutherland North Regeneration Partnership
Mike Lunan	Friends of the Far North Line
Carole Whittaker	Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council
CLlr Willie Mackay	Highland Council
David Swanson	Highland Council (Wick Public Service Obligation)
CLlr Ron Gunn	Highland Council
Jonathan Gunn	Highland Council Roads
Frank Roach	HITRANS
Zoe Mackenzie	Maree Todd MSP’s Office
Helen Inkster	Pentland Ferries
Sandy Mackie	Scrabster Harbour
Derek Glasgow	Scotrail
Kristopher Bevan	Serco – NorthLink Ferries
Jay Anderson	Stagecoach Inverness
Gerry MacInnes	Stagecoach
John Deighan	Thurso & Wick Trades Union Council
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:

CLlr Raymond Bremner	Highland Council
Dougie Cook	HIAL

# 2. Minutes of last CTF meeting 21.06.2022

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

# 3. Review of actions from last meeting

**CTF(2022)M001/A001** – *Dougie Cook to send information on airport café and WWII trail to Caithness Chamber of Commerce for circulation* **COMPLETE**

An invitation to quote had been issued for the Café concession and had been well responded to but no quotes were received. Interested parties were asked for feedback and a revised invitation to quote will be issued shortly by HIAL's procurement team taking the feedback into account.

**CTF(2022)M001/A006** – *Trudy Morris to highlight areas of inadequate road repairs and Jonathan Gunn to arrange inspection of these* **COMPLETE**

**CTF(2022)M001/A008** – *Jonathan Gunn to ensure Roads Officer aware of deterioration of road raised by Carole Whittaker* **COMPLETE**

**CTF(2022)M001/A009** – *David Swanson to take up issue with timetable / service information with Stagecoach* **COMPLETE**

A response from Alex Flanagan at Stagecoach was received confirming that on occasions when they may need to utilise an alternative departure stop due to road closures etc., they would take the below action:

- Notices/posters on the affected stop redirecting passengers to the temporary replacement stop.
- Notices on the buses informing passengers of impending revisions.
- 'Service Update' section of the website would be updated to reflect the closure site, and location of the stop the service is being relocated to.
- Scheduled posts on their Twitter feed informing of the above details.

In terms of ticketing, they would not ordinarily revise the naming, mainly because when they do encounter closures resulting in a stop being relocated, the new stop tends to be as close as possible to the existing one they are unable to service.

The only time they would look to rename stops within the ticketing system was if the works/closure were set to be on for a significant period of time, in which case they would subsequently revise the service registration/timetables to reflect this.

**CTF(2022)M002/A001** – *The Chair to write to Transport Scotland’s Ferries Department re the Hamnavoe dry docking in 2023 and use of the Pentalina as a replacement vessel.* **COMPLETE**

In the response, Alan McCabe advised that the MV Pentalina had been considered as it seemed an ideal solution to cover for MV Hamnavoe whilst in dry dock. However, when they assessed the Pentalina for use on the Scrabster-Stromness route, it was found to be unsuitable. It was believed to relate to a stern door issue.

**CTF(2022)M002/A002** – *The Chair to write to the UK Transport Minister & Jamie Stone MSP re DVSA delays.* **COMPLETE**

Trudy Morris noted that this had been done. Jay Anderson noted the turnaround of driving licenses had decreased from roughly 5-6 weeks to 2-3 weeks which was the pre-covid timescales.

**CTF(2022)M002/A003** - *Robert Gillespie to put Cllr Mackay in touch with David Beaton to discuss the possibility of reinstating the Bus Users Group* **ONGOING**

*Chair to contact David Beaton to put him in touch with Cllr Willie Mackay.*

## 4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 Cllr Willie Mackay commented that the number of attendees at the meeting was decreasing. He suggested a substitute should attend should someone not be available.
- 4.2 Mike Lunan suggested Cllr Raymond Bremner (Leader of the Highland Council) should be approached for available dates in March and the date of the next meeting scheduled to accommodate.

## 5. Transport Updates

### 5.1 Wick John O’Groats Airport / HIAL

- 5.1.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix A**).
- 5.1.2 Trudy Morris noted that an invitation to quote had been issued for the café concession and had been well responded to, but no quotes were received. Interested parties were asked for feedback and a revised invitation to quote would be issued shortly by HIAL’s procurement team taking the feedback into account.

**CTF(2022)M003/A001** – *Trudy Morris to contact Dougie Cook at HIAL regarding the delays with the café concession.*

- 5.1.3 Sandy Mackie asked what the passenger targets were for the duration of the PSO contract. David Swanson advised that they were hoping for 1200-1300 passengers per month. 934 for October was good, considering they were expecting a dip in October. The fact that numbers continued to increase was promising.
- 5.1.4 Trudy Morris noted that DSRL were meant to underwrite this by block booking seats, but this had not happened. It has been brought up at recent meetings as it was part of the business case.

- 5.1.5 Carole Whittaker queried that after reading about the new Kirkwall to London City flight, why an Edinburgh flight had not yet been confirmed. Trudy Morris replied that when the tenders were put out for the PSO flights, there wasn't a viable option for the Edinburgh route.
- 5.1.6 Regarding the new Kirkwall to London City flight, which is stopping over in Dundee, Trudy Morris asked David Swanson to enquire into why HIAL was not looking into a Wick stop off.

**CTF(2022)M003/A002** – *David Swanson to speak to HIAL re. stopover at Wick for Kirkwall to London City flight.*

- 5.1.7 Carole Whittaker asked whether HIAL had plans to extend the flights from Wick to other destinations, i.e., Inverness and also if a stopover at Wick would be considered. David Swanson replied that through the PSO contract there was certain funding from the Government, with scope and budgets limited. Scottish Government would not support a subsidised Inverness flight as it fell in the jurisdiction of one local authority area. Trudy Morris also noted an Inverness flight had been explored but the cost was prohibitive.
- 5.1.8 Trudy Morris noted there was no online check-in for Eastern Airways. David Swanson confirmed that it should be implemented shortly, issues had been around the baggage handling. Trudy also noted issues with seat reservations being taken on the website but no actual seats could be booked on the plane. David confirmed that this had been corrected.

**CTF(2022)/M003/A003** – *David Swanson to communicate when Eastern Airways online check-in is live*

- 5.1.9 Cllr Willie Mackay queried why HIAL had just employed 7 new members of staff. Trudy Morris advised this could be statutory requirements for the airport and that some would be part-time but would request more detail from HIAL.

**CTF(2022)/M003/A004** – *Trudy Morris to contact Dougie Cook, HIAL with regards the 7 new members of staff.*

## 5.2 Scrabster Harbour

- 5.2.1 A written update was provided (**Appendix B**).
- 5.2.2 Sandy Mackie reported that Scrabster Harbour had a good half year which reflected the versatility of the port and diverse activity base. They were facing challenges with escalating costs; electricity alone having risen fivefold. Government assistance was welcome but clarity beyond April was making it difficult for businesses.
- 5.2.3 Critical maintenance of the linkspan was due to take place in January. Although serviced every year this would be the second stage of replacing the second cylinder that raises and lowers the linkspan, so for a period it would not be available.
- 5.2.4 Cruise bookings for next year were looking very good. A cruise event would take place on 1st December to link up local business and attractions with the cruise industry. Three ground handling companies would be attending.

## 5.3 Wick Harbour

- 5.3.1 There was no representative for Wick Harbour at the meeting.

5.3.2 A written report was provided (**Appendix C**).

## 5.4 Gills Harbour

5.4.1 No written update was provided and no representative was present at the meeting.

## 5.5 Pentland Ferries

5.5.1 Helen Inkster reported that passenger figures were good, above pre-covid levels. They remained at that level even throughout summer with a reduced service. Fares would increase from April 2023. The MV Alfred was still servicing the Pentland Firth route. They had a new Master on the vessel and so there may be some extra disruptions over winter while he becomes familiar with the berths and crossings.

5.5.2 The MV Pentalina was currently in Stromness and remained for sale or for charter.

5.5.3 Helen had previously reported of internet problems at Gills Bay but since changing provider, the issue had been resolved.

5.5.4 Trudy Morris noted it was good to see they had recruited all the customer service staff they had advertised for.

5.5.5 Trudy Morris reported on her correspondence with the Ferries Department at Transport Scotland regarding the MV Pentalina being used as a replacement for the Hamnavoe's dry docking. They had advised that it was found to be unsuitable and that it was related to the stern door. Trudy noted she continued to raise the issue of not having a suitable replacement. Helen Inkster advised that she was not aware of the stern door being a problem in Stromness or Scrabster. Helen asked Trudy to share the email from the Ferries Department as she was happy to look into it.

**CTF(2022)M003/A005** – *Trudy Morris to liaise with Helen Inkster re. Ferries Department email regarding the MV Pentalina being used to cover the MV Hamnavoe whilst in dry dock.*

## 5.6 Serco NorthLink

5.6.1 Kris Bevan gave an update on behalf of Serco NorthLink Ferries. Of note:

- July 2022 marked 10 years of Serco NorthLink Ferries operating on the route.
- They had carried out 9 in-water surveys and 29 scheduled dry dockings.
- 32,845 sailings had been completed, covering 2.9million nautical miles.
- 5 1/4 million meters of freight had been shipped, equivalent to 387,000 trailers.
- They had transported 1.4 million sheep and 250,000 cattle.
- 2.8 million passengers had sailed.
- They had served up just over 220,000 portions of fish and chips, their most popular dish on the menu.

5.6.2 Kris also reported that in 2022 149,593 passengers had been carried on the Stromness to Scrabster route which was up from just over 100,000 in 2021. An increase of almost 50%, bringing them back to pre-pandemic passenger levels.

5.6.3 Other operations:

- Covid was still impacting the business with staff absences, however passenger services were maintained.
- A plasma guard and surface purificator would be installed on the Hamnavoe during dry dock in January 2023. It had been successfully installed in buildings, but they believed it was the first installation in the maritime sector.
- The Hamnavoe had a technical issue with the rudder and was taken out of service on the 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> September. A bolt on the rudder was found to be missing. A new nut and washer were fabricated locally in Orkney.
- Currently recruiting staff in Caithness but had difficulty recruiting in Orkney for their Customer Contact Centre. They were able to re-route calls across their network to help with this.
- The Hamnavoe dry docking scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> January, this would coincide with the linkspan works in Scrabster. There will be additional sailings on north and south, from Kirkwall to Aberdeen and Serco NorthLink will work closely to ensure that passengers who still want to travel across the Pentland Firth can do so.

5.6.4 Cllr Ron Gunn noted how successful they had been and asked how many times they had to cancel due to bad weather. Kris did not have the information to hand but would take an action to find out.

**CTF(2022)M003/A006** - *Kris Bevan to advise how many cancellations of the Hamnavoe were due to bad weather.*

## 5.7 Scotrail

5.7.1 Trudy Morris noted the response to the letter sent to the Transport Minister following the meeting in June. Transport Scotland advised that the radio electronic token block (RETB) signalling was currently being delivered and in the short term would improve reliability and passenger information on the line. Network Rail was currently working up longer term proposals and costs for more significant enhancements to the line that would enable additional services to run. It was planning to submit these proposals and costs to the Scottish Government in the new year.

5.7.2 Derek Glasgow advised that RMT members were going to vote on the latest pay deal. He was optimistic that members would take the pay rise. This would only solve the Scottish element of the rail strikes.

5.7.3 With regards to improvements to the line, the main one was the Delmore loop. It will give access for more trains and improve timetables for freight and passenger services. Derek Glasgow advised that rail enhancements were still on target and that meetings were held every month.

5.7.4 Cllr Ron Gunn commented that a number of people had been complaining about the lack of trolley on the train. Derek thought that it should be back on but would check and revert back.

**CTF(2022)M003/A007** – *Derek Glasgow to look into the situation with regards to the trolley service.*

5.7.5 Trudy Morris asked what the current passenger numbers were. Derek advised that, coming out of covid, trying to get people back on public transport had been a challenge and this was further impacted by the strikes. Passenger numbers were below pre covid - 42% was the last report.

5.7.7 Mike Lunan asked if the long-term plan to centre more operations at Helmsdale was still going ahead. Derek advised it was still in the plan but not being actively progressed.

## 5.8 Highland Council Roads

- 5.8.1 A programme of works for 2022/23 was provided (**Appendix D**)
- 5.8.2 Jonathan Gunn reported that Caithness had completed quite an extensive programme of resurfacing this summer.
- 5.8.3 They had issues this year as their tar supplier was purchasing bitumen from a company who was sourcing it from Russia, this led to delays at the start of the summer. The change in legislation where white diesel was to be used instead of red also put an extra cost on tar.
- 5.8.4 They had to change their bitumen supplier to one they had previously used and had issues with this. The roads were so poor their programme should have taken 3 weeks but took 7. There was also an issue with a chemical reaction in the spray for the bitumen. The company providing it could not find the problem. Caithness was the priority, delaying Sutherland surface dressing. The cost of bitumen was up 80% on the year before.
- 5.8.5 The next works to be completed were signage, bridge repairs and drainage works.
- 5.8.6 Highland Council had taken delivery of 3500T of salt and were hoping to get a salt boat into Wick before Christmas with another 2000T which should see the county through most of winter. Salt had gone up almost £20 per tonne from what it was last year.
- 5.8.7 Trudy Morris queried the surface dressing on the programme, Jonathan advised that it could only be done in June and July. The chips needed 6 weeks, decent warm weather and traffic to embed before the winter weather.
- 5.8.8 Trudy Morris highlighted the poor quality of the Halladale road at Bighouse. Jonathan advised that Sutherland still had quite a lot of their capital programme of tarring still to do for this financial year. One of the issues is that Caithness and Sutherland needed to share the lorries however, he was confident they would be able to do patching on the Halladale road this financial year.
- 5.8.9 Mike Lunan commented on the condition of the roads in Thurso. Jonathan advised that Thurso is due to get the water mains renewed in the next couple of years, Wick was currently getting done. As Scottish Water would be digging up the roads, they are currently minimising works to the worst areas.
- 5.8.10 Trudy Morris noted that it would be helpful if the public knew about the problems they had faced.
- 5.8.11 Carole Whittaker asked Jonathan about a previous action regarding the Duncansby Head Road. It had some large potholes and the edge had a drop of about 6 inches. She mentioned that motorhomes were still in the area and quite often having to pass on the narrow stretch of road. Jonathan advised he would speak to Kevin Mackay, the roads officer, and report back on when temporary patching would be done.

**CTF(2022)M003/A008** – *Jonathan Gunn to contact Kevin Mackay (roads officer) regarding Duncansby Head Road temporary patching and road edging and advise timescale.*

- 5.8.12 Cllr Willie Mackay noted that the roads report would be put to the Association of Community Councils at the next meeting and distributed amongst all the community councils.

## 5.9 BEAR Scotland / Transport Scotland

- 5.9.1 A programme of works for 2022/23 was provided (**Appendix E**)
- 5.9.2 Marco Bardelli reported they were getting on well with their broad based programme of different types of activity: drainage, casual improvements, repairs, road markings, signage. Construction costs had increased, particularly bitumen. Resurfacing works in the north west unit would be completed by December.
- 5.9.3 Trudy Morris highlighted there were no plans for the A9 north now that Berriedale had been completed. Marco Bardelli said he was happy to take any suggestions. Trudy asked if there was any work in the pipeline for the Helmsdale to Brora stretch. Marco advised Cambusavie, Lothmore and south of Dunbeath were locations that he had put forward, but no future programme of improvement works was in place. He would welcome feedback from bus drivers on specific locations of difficulty. Marco reported that all programmes and budgets were now under review with the Scottish Government. Typically, in recent years they had a budget of around £7-8 million for the NW unit to do some minor improvement works. He advised as an example that improving a couple of bends could quite easily cost a million pounds and also that the budget was to cater for landslides repairs for network resilience.
- 5.9.4 Trudy Morris asked Forum members to give feedback on any suggestions for areas for improvements and would particularly welcome feedback from Stagecoach. Marco advised that the Scottish Government provided data on how long the road had been closed over a period of time and that he would report back with the information.

### **CTF(2022)M003/A009 – Marco Bardelli to provide statistics on A9 closures.**

- 5.9.5 Frank Roach noted that, as the Chair on the Community Council in Rogart, he was lobbying for a temporary VMS to be put in place to advise motorists when there were abnormal loads on the road. He reported that, if the windfarms around Lairg got planning, they would have around 2500 abnormal loads over the next few years, all going through Rogart. It would impact on journey times. Marco Bardelli advised that abnormal loads would be discussed with planners, along with appropriate times and groups. Messages could be relayed remotely and could be insisted on at the time of planning. Frank raised the point that the transport management plan only considered it as temporary construction activity. There should be a full transport assessment to deal with the cumulative effects and that every windfarm should cover the costs of a VMS.
- 5.9.6 Cllr Willie Mackay noted that although the Causeymire had no potholes, there were no verge cuttings resulting in water on the road. He also noted there were no deer warning signs.

## 5.10 Highland Council Public Transport

- 5.10.1 No written update was provided and no representative was present at the meeting.
- 5.10.2 Trudy Morris noted issues with the bus rural network as highlighted to the Transport Minister in June. It was noted that even before the pandemic, the bus network was shrinking. A recent BBC News article



reported that Britain's bus network had lost 134 million miles of coverage round Britain. Half a million homes, 64,000 of them in Scotland had no regular bus services. Trudy noted that the Highland Council had purchased 12 hydrogen buses for a pilot in Nairn and Inverness but it would be years before anything could be replicated in other areas. Trudy noted it needed collaboration with a range of partners to find solutions to the region's connectivity issues.

**CTF(2022)M003/A010** – *Trudy Morris to organise a meeting with bus service providers.*

## 5.11 Stagecoach

- 5.11.1 Trudy Morris noted that the Chamber had previously facilitated the bus users' group and that Cllr Willie Mackay would like to reinstate it. Jay Anderson advised that David Beaton, the Managing Director of Stagecoach, was happy to discuss this.
- 5.11.2 Jay Anderson reported that they had been experiencing staffing issues. However, by the beginning of December they expected the staffing in Thurso and Wick to be level.
- 5.11.3 There had been an upturn in passenger numbers. Since June, passenger numbers and revenue had a slight increase and remained steady. This was likely partly due to the rail strikes, they expected it to decrease slightly coming into winter.
- 5.11.4 Since the last meeting, they had seen an improvement in the turnaround time for licenses, reducing to 2-3 weeks.
- 5.11.5 The Highland Council had granted school contracts to other operators in the area. This would allow Stagecoach to get back to their commercial operations. Trudy Morris queried whether this would limit availability of buses elsewhere but Jay advised that it would not impact any other operations.
- 5.11.6 Trudy Morris asked if Stagecoach had plans for doing anything different, e.g electric/hydrogen etc. Jay confirmed they had 25 electric vehicles for Inverness, the city centre was going to be electric only. They were looking at various options for the fleet for next year.
- 5.11.7 Cllr Willie Mackay noted that the Council had just taken delivery of a new bus shelter for Wick, opposite the Norseman Hotel. They were waiting for the double yellow lines to be done on Whitechapel Road before the bus stop would be back in use.
- 5.11.8 Cllr Ron Gunn asked how people could find up to date information regarding the bus times and delays etc. Jay confirmed all information was put on the app, however recognised not everybody had access to this. Stagecoach were aware they had an issue and they needed to provide better communication. There was a discussion around the real time displays on Orlig Street and outside the Norseman and who was responsible for keeping the information correct. It was noted that the real time display in Orlig Street was too high and difficult to read. Frank Roach to look into this.

**CTF(2022)M003/A011** – *Jan Anderson to confirm who is responsible for the real time displays and find out why they were not up to date.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A012** – *Frank Roach to find out who was responsible for the real time display on Orlig Street and get it lowered.*

## 5.12 HITRANS

- 5.12.1 Frank Roach reported that they had tested the battery train which had now been superseded by a zero emissions train, assuming to be hydrogen. The ideal location for testing would be between Wick and Thurso. Trials were looking to take place in 2025, in service trains post 2030.
- 5.12.2 The request to stop system which was currently being trialled in Scotsalder was revealing good results and improving performance as it would cut down on fuel and provide greater reliability.

## 6. Press Communications

- 6.1 Trudy Morris noted a press release would be issued following the meeting highlighting the positive developments.

## 7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 There was no other business

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 Next meeting to take place on Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at 10:00.

## 9. Actions ongoing from previous meetings

**CTF(2022)M002/A003** - Robert Gillespie to put Cllr Mackay in touch with David Beaton to discuss the possibility of reinstating the Bus Users Group **ONGOING**

*Chair to contact David Beaton and put him in touch with Cllr Willie Mackay.*

## 10. Actions arising from this meeting

**CTF(2022)M003/A001** – Trudy Morris to speak to Dougie Cook at HIAL regarding the café concession.

**CTF(2022)M003/A002** – David Swanson to speak to HIAL re. stopover at Wick for Kirkwall to London City flight.

**CTF(2022)/M003/A003** – David Swanson to communicate when Eastern Airways online check-in is live.

**CTF(2022)/M003/A004** – Trudy Morris to query with HIAL number of new staff.

**CTF(2022)M003/A005** – Trudy Morris to liaise with Helen Inkster re. Ferries Department email regarding the MV Pentalina being used to cover the MV Hamnavoe whilst in dry dock. **COMPLETE**

**CTF(2022)M003/A006** - Kris Bevan to advise how many cancellations of the Hamnavoe due to bad weather. **COMPLETE**

Kris provided the below update:

*In response to the question posed at yesterday's Transport Forum, there have been 67 failures after relief events recorded in our performance monitoring from Contact Year (CY) 1 commencing 5<sup>th</sup> July 2012 through to end of CY1 of the next contract (up to the end of June 2021).*

*A more detailed breakdown of our performance monitoring can be found online at <https://www.northlinkferries.co.uk/news/statistics/>.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A007** – Derek Glasgow to look into the situation with regards to the trolleys. **COMPLETE**

Derek provided the below update:

*During the pandemic a large volume of our hospitality moved onto other roles meaning when we resumed services in April we had significantly less staff than we had pre-pandemic. We are in progress of a large recruitment plan which will grow staff numbers.*

*Currently we only have one person working on the FNL. The TS Grant Agreement does not require us to offer any coverage on the FNL between Oct and Mar.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A008** – Jonathan to speak to Kevin Mackay, the roads officer, and report back on when the Duncansby Head is going to get some temporary patching done and find out about the road edge as well.

**CTF(2022)M003/A009** – Marco Bardelli to provide statistics on A9 closures. **COMPLETE**

Marco provided the below report:

*Transport Scotland recognise the importance of the A9 as a lifeline for the Caithness and Sutherland community. Transport Scotland understand the reliance on this route in order to access vital services further afield such as healthcare and education as well as the daily community essentials provided locally by business and the service sector. As such, the organisation through its contracted Operating Companies manage the trunk roads so as to minimise disruption whenever possible and through Contractors manage improvements to the route where feasible.*

*Safety of the public and the workforce is the only reason the A9 and A99 are closed for works, due in the main to restricted widths. Cost or convenience for the contractors are not deemed an acceptable reason for closing a road for maintenance. Planned maintenance works always provide for the passage of emergency service vehicles even when a road closure is required. Planned road closures are well publicised and only permitted at night when traffic volumes are extremely low. Where reasonable alternative diversion routes are not available, the work plan includes "amnesties" during which work stops at pre-publicised times to permit any waiting traffic to safely be escorted through the site to continue their journey.*

*In relation to unplanned incidents recorded by Transport Scotland's Trunk Road Operating Company and generally attended by Police Scotland that caused the road to be closed, a high level review covering 2017 to 2021 has shown that between Inverness and Thurso/Wick the trunk road was closed for 0.4% of the*

*time. This was on 66 occasions, 180 hours in 5 years due to Road Traffic Collisions (51 times), Fires (6), High Wind (5) and other Police incidents (4).*

*While being on the road affected when these incidents occur can be inconvenient and occasionally concerning in urgent circumstances, local diversions can be available and even when not the passage of emergency vehicles is generally assured through the normal emergency services led processes.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A010** – *Trudy Morris to organise a meeting with bus network.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A011** – *Jan Anderson to confirm who is responsible for the bus stop digital displays and find out why they're not up to date.*

**CTF(2022)M003/A012** - *Frank Roach to find out who is responsible for the real time display on Orlig Street and get it lowered.*

## Appendix A – Highlands & Islands Airport Ltd



Caithness Transport Forum update November 2022.

### **Public Service Obligation (PSO)**

The PSO has now had a full 6 months of flights with some teething troubles but overall, a positive public reaction. Passenger numbers have fluctuated but remain below where we would want them to be.

Talks are underway with stakeholders to identify any improvements or initiatives for the service.

### **COVID-19 Operations**

Wick JOG Airport is currently COVID State 1 (one member of staff testing positive) all HIAL airports are still experiencing cases of COVID.

### **Aviation Statistics**

HIAL has not experienced staff shortages in its core operation but is still seeing airline staffing issues causing flight cancellations and delays.

As forecast business travel remains far below pre-Covid levels and onward connectivity options from the region are still reduced.

### **Statistics for Wick JOG:**

Passengers Numbers

Eastern Airways - 934 for October

Aircraft Movements

October – 183 flights

The airport continues to be busy with ferry flights and an increase of RAF/MoD flights.

Unfortunately, Wiking helicopters Germany went into insolvency and consequently Heli – ops to the Beatrice Offshore Windfarm have ceased.

### **Projects update**

HIAL continues to invest in the airport and to conduct capital projects.

- Continued improvements to the surface water drainage system will see CCTV surveys of the entire system before the end of the year and we are currently out to tender. We are continuing our

partnership with UHI Thurso College, Environmental Research Institute (ERI) to identify any contaminants in the runway water runoff through the winter 22/23 season.

- The airport heating system upgrades are now complete with £250k spent on the system in the last fiscal year.
- Terminal building refurbishment has started with the new Security office/training room now in use.
- We will be purchasing an all-electric baggage truck this FY and that is going through our procurement process. This is our second all electric vehicle at the airport.

### **Café Concession**

An invitation to quote was issued for the café concession and was well responded to but no quotes were received. Interested parties were asked for feedback and a revised invitation to quote will be issued shortly by our procurement team taking the feedback into account.

### **Audits and Safety meetings**

We have had three CAA audits this year Air Navigation Service Provider, Aerodrome Standards & RFFS and lastly a MET provider audit.

Particularly good reports received for all 3 and all the actions from them have now been closed.

We have also carried out internal audits by the airport, peer audits and SMT auditing.

We continue with our safety meetings and Eastern representatives have attended all the Airport Safety Committee and Local Runway Safety Team meetings since April. There has been good attendance from all our other stakeholders as well.

### **Staffing levels**

Security has recently employed a total of seven new members of staff, a mixture of full-time part time and maternity cover and their training is ongoing.

ATC staffing is currently reduced to three with a member of staff having permanently lost their medical and another with a temporary loss of medical.

We are in the process of recruiting a trainee air traffic controller; interviews took place in October and a successful candidate has been referred for a medical. If successful, the candidate will commence training in January 2023.

The Airport Fire Service has recently recruited three firefighters to bring the staffing compliment back to pre-Covid levels.

### **Opening hours**

The reduced staffing levels in ATC will result in tactical closures of the airport throughout the day to accommodate breaks and potentially reduced opening hours.

We do not foresee a resolution to this situation for at least 6 months.

Eastern Airways and other stakeholders have been informed of the issues we face and will continue to give regular updates.

The 24/7 cover for emergency flights remains unchanged.

## Appendix B – Scrabster Harbour



CAITHNESS TRANSPORT FORUM 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

#### 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 has made encouraging progress in financial year 2022-23. The trading results for the first six months are well ahead of budget projections.

The headlines regarding port activity for the half year period to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 are as follows.

- Total vessel arrivals 1,077 compared with 1,110 in the same period last year.
- Total vessel tonnage was 5.230 million tonnes, an 8% increase on last year.
- Ferry passenger numbers totalled 122,634, an increase of 51% on the 2021 position.



- Fish box landings amounted to 145,261 boxes, a small increase on the corresponding period in 2021.
- General cargo activity has been minimal in line with expectations.
- Both Faroese fish cargo volumes and coastal tanker fuel deliveries are in line with the previous year.
- Offshore energy activity has included 86 vessel arrivals, a two-fold increase on the previous year. This has included the support of an Oil & Gas seismic survey campaign West of Shetland and survey activity in support of offshore wind development.
- The 2022 cruise season was modest but included the largest vessel to ever berth at Scrabster, Holland America's 61,000 GRT cruise vessel "Zaandam".
- The redeveloped St Ola Pier is providing valuable additional capacity at the port. Recent activities have included cruise, cargo operations and storage, fishing and project mobilisations and demobilisations.



## 2. FORWARD LOOK

- In common with all businesses, the Trust faces significant cost increases over the second half of the financial year particularly related to energy costs and debt servicing charges. The UK Government assistance with energy costs is welcome but the quantum of the support is not yet clear. In addition, there is a concern regarding what support, if any, will be provided beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- Critical maintenance is planned for the ferry linkspan during the annual dry docking of the ferry vessel in January 2023. The linkspan will not be available during these works. This is the second phase of the maintenance works, the first phase was completed during the 2022 dry docking period.

- The Trust continues in dialogue with the Pentland Offshore Floating Wind project and the West of Orkney Windfarm project regarding their port support needs.
- The Trust is currently supporting the project to lay rock armour protection on the new Shetland HVDC Link Subsea cable where it makes landfall at Noss Head.
- UK Government is expected to publish its new Target Operating Model shortly showing how international trade will operate in the UK at the end of 2023. This is expected to provide new guidance on import controls and whether physical checks will be required at approved Border Control Posts.
- Cruise bookings for 2023 are encouraging with a potential twenty calls booked to date.
- To assist with the development of cruise activity, a local cruise event is planned for 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The aim of the event is to raise awareness and link local tourist attractions and business with representatives from the cruise industry.
- The Trust held its Annual General Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Heather Calder has been co-opted onto the Trust Board of Management.

**4<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

## Appendix C – Wick Harbour



# Wick Harbour

## Update for Caithness Transport Forum – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### Marina

- Visiting yacht numbers during 2022 turned out to be our busiest year since the installation of the marina in 2007. Three hundred and fifty (350) visiting vessels utilised the facility with a total of 695 yacht days in harbour and crew numbers were 879. There was also an upturn in the number of local vessels using the marina.

### Cargo

- Cargo ship numbers continue to be poor this year for reasons stated at the last meeting, however, forecast for 2023 is looking brighter with the harbour receiving quite a few pricing enquiries.

### Offshore Wind

- Offshore Wind business has now entered the winter period of operations where vessel numbers are cut back to a minimum due to weather constraints. It has been a reasonably successful year with vessels from Moray East utilising the harbour as well as the Bowl. Looking forward to next year, it has been intimated that a number of extra vessels will be operating from the harbour from April through to October on both BOWL and Moray East.

- **Fishing.** Remains on a par with last year. Local crab/lobster fishers are witnessing an improvement in landings of crab and appear to have had a reasonable lobster season which helped to offset the poor crab catches earlier in the year.

Ian Cormack  
Harbour Master  
Wick Harbour

# Appendix D – Highland Council Roads

Inlay/Overlay agreed at Roads Monthly meetings (budget figures were not available at time of Committee Meeting)  
 Surface Dressing agreed at Roads Monthly meetings (budget figures were not available at time of Committee Meeting)  
 Additional works  
red text Works not carried out - see status comments

2022/23 Priority	Activity	Route	Road Name	General Description	Average Road Width (m)	Scheme Length (m)	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	cost per (m <sup>2</sup> )	Estimated Cost to Lay	Status	Actual Length
1	Inlay	U1565	Brael Terrace	From Junction to School	6	135	810	18	£14,580.00	Complete	135
2	Overlay	B870	Bishophill to Watten	Bishophill to Geop	3	1300	4300	13	£57,300.00	Complete	1300
3	Inlay	U1733	Bowermadden to Gillock	Bower Primary school junction with B876	6	30	180	18	£3,240.00	Complete	30
4	Inlay	A836	Reay to Thurso	Alexanders at Reay village	6	300	1800	18	£32,400.00	Complete	430
5	Inlay	U4080	Manson's Lane	Junction with Riverside road	6	50	300	18	£5,400.00	Complete	150
6	Overlay	C1033	Everley to Crockster Toll	Moss of Mey	3	2000	6000	15	£90,000.00	Complete	2100
7	Inlay	B874	Glenngly to Halkirk	Geize to Buckies	1.2	400	480	18	£8,640.00	extant to be reviewed	
8	Inlay	C1001	Isauld to Glenngly	Westfield Bridge	1.2	250	300	18	£5,400.00	Complete [Pothole Pro]	250
9	Overlay	C1001	Isauld to Glenngly	East of Westfield Bridge	6	700	4200	18	£75,600.00	Patched and holding	
10	Overlay	C1006	Wester Bridge to Greendale	Auchhorn	3	1000	3000	15	£75,000.00	under review	
11	Overlay	C1065	Latheronwheel to Brechungie	Boutfack	3	2000	6000	15	£90,000.00	Complete	2100
12	Overlay	U2220	Castletown to Stonegunn	Silmister Bends	3.5	400	1400	15	£21,000.00	Complete [Pothole Pro]	400
13	Inlay	A836	Thurso to John O'Groats	Murkie Edges	1.2	1000	1200	18	£21,600.00	to include drainage	
14	Overlay	U1826	Harpdsdale Township	Harpdsdale loop South side	3	860	2580	15	£38,700.00	Complete	1100
15	Surface Dress	U1826	Harpdsdale Township	Harpdsdale loop South west	3	1500	4500	3	£13,500.00	Complete	1500
16	Overlay	U1913	Plochan to Brawbin	Loch Calder	3	1200	3600	15	£54,000.00	minor patching carried out	100
17	Overlay	U1113	Achow to Osdley	300m at top of hill	3	300	900	15	£13,500.00	Complete	300
18	Overlay	U1113	Achow to Osdley	Bulreanrob Farm road	3	400	1200	15	£18,000.00	Complete	400
19	Surface Dress	U4149	Pennyland Drive	Whole road	6	3050	6450	3	£19,440.00	Complete	350
20	Surface Dress	U3493	Orkney View	Whole road	6	370	2220	3	£6,660.00		
21	Surface Dress	U3492	Murkie View	Whole road	6	220	1320	3	£3,960.00		
22	Surface Dress	U3547	Hennietta Street	Whole road	7.5	440	3300	3	£9,900.00	cancelled due to SW works	
23	Overlay	U1832	Torbuaie	[Upper Achies, harpdsdale]	3	665	1995	15	£29,925.00	Complete	665
24	Overlay	U1241	Newtown Row	from Laggan to Vinum	3	1080	3240	15	£48,600.00	Partial complete	350
25	Overlay	U2893	Instick Road	Whole road	3	940	2820	15	£42,300.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
26	Overlay	B874	Pooihoy to Watten Mains	Lynegar	3	300	1500	15	£22,500.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
27	Overlay	U1739	Bowertower	Whole road	3	1920	5760	15	£86,400.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
28	Overlay	U1917	Brawbin to Shurry	at Brawbin Farm	3	1500	4500	15	£67,500.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
29	Overlay	U1093	Burnhill Loop	West side	3	460	1380	15	£20,700.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
30	Overlay	U1097	Mains of Forze	Whole road	3	420	1260	15	£18,900.00		
31	Overlay	B874	Lochshell Watten Mains	Watten Mains to Knapperfield	3	1600	4800	15	£72,000.00		
32	Inlay	A882	Wick to Georgemas	30 signs at Wick	6	30	180	18	£3,240.00		
33	Inlay	A882	Wick to Georgemas	Milton to the 30 signs at Wick	1.2	250	300	18	£5,400.00		
34	Inlay	A88	Wick to John O'Groats	High St / Bridge St	7	50	350	15	£5,250.00		
35	Overlay	C1033	Everley to Crockster Toll	Instick Brse	3	608	1824	15	£27,360.00		
36	Overlay	C1048	Castletown Durran Mains	Instick Brse	3.5	648	2248	15	£33,720.00		
37	Inlay	A59	Wick to John O'Groats	Stemster road to John O'Groats Guest House	1.2	300	360	15	£5,400.00		
38	Overlay	C1069	Pooihoy to Wester	East of Durran Mains	3	84	252	15	£3,780.00	Complete	80
39	Overlay	C1069	Pooihoy to Wester	West of Durran Mains	3	124	372	15	£5,580.00	Complete	120
40	Surface Dress	C1093	Lybster to Achavenich	Rumster Forest	3	2200	6600	3	£19,800.00	Partial complete (no more works)	300
41	Surface Dress	B874	Pooihoy to Watten Mains	Gillock to Paulds	3	1200	3600	3	£10,800.00	Complete	1200
42	Surface Dress	C1029	Occumster to Watten	Lower Camster to Camster Lodge	3	3500	10500	3	£31,500.00	Complete	3000
43	Surface Dress	U3637	Swanson Avenue	Whole road	6	560	3360	3	£10,080.00	Complete	560
44	Surface Dress		Coghill Street	Willowbank to John Horne Drive	6	70	420	3	£1,260.00	Complete	70
45	Overlay	U1735	Gillock to Bowermadden	Hill to Bredterdoran	3	690	2070	15	£31,050.00	Complete	800
46	Surface Dress		John Horne Drive/ Doocot View	Whole road	6	210	1260	3	£3,780.00	Complete	210
47	Surface Dress	U1121	Camroth to Achnacraig	Whole road	3.5	900	3150	3	£9,450.00	Complete	900
48	Surface Dress	4824	Glenngly to Halkirk	Budies to Amster	3	966	4968	3	£14,904.00	Completed 2021	
49	Surface Dress	B876	Reiss to Castletown	Kilminster Moss	6	1200	7200	3	£21,600.00	Complete	1200
50	Overlay	U1871	Halkirk to Plochan	Sour Hill to Plochan	3	800	2400	15	£36,000.00		
51	Overlay	U1523	Westerdale to Lochmore	Westerdale to Strathmore Lodge	3	2600	6800	15	£102,000.00		
52	Overlay	C1029	Occumster to Watten	Lower Camster	3	1100	3300	15	£49,500.00	Complete	40
53	Overlay	U1113	Achow to Osdley	Bulreanrob	3	400	0	15	£9.00		
54	Overlay	C1029	Occumster to Watten	West Cyth Farm	3	750	2250	15	£33,750.00		
55	Inlay	A882	Wick to Georgemas	Oldhall to West Watten	1.2	800	960	18	£17,280.00	Partial complete	400
56	Overlay	U1113	Upper Lybster	Interconnection to the western end of road	3	200	600	15	£9,000.00		
57	Overlay	U1165	Occumster harbour	Whole road	3	620	1860	15	£27,900.00		
58	Overlay	C1093	Lybster to Achavenich	Castieheather to Egnal	3	600	1800	15	£27,000.00		
59	Overlay	U1874	Gerston Farm	Whole road	3	480	1440	15	£21,600.00		
60	Overlay	U2052	Forze Achreame	at Achreame	3	200	600	15	£9,000.00	Complete	280
61	Surface Dress	U4057	Heathfield	Whole road	6	350	2100	3	£6,300.00	Complete	350
62	Surface Dress	U4038	George Crescent	Whole road	6	185	1110	3	£3,330.00		
63	Inlay	U1360	Reiss to Slobter	Near playing field	3	100	300	18	£5,400.00		
64	Overlay	U1300	Halkirk to Paulds	at Bower Junction	3	300	900	15	£13,500.00	Complete	350
65	Overlay	U1727	Reaster to Bowermadden	Auchorn to Murza 2 bits	3	480	1440	15.00	£6,100.00		
66	Overlay	U1731	Lochside to Hunter	above Granton Mains	3	377	1131	15	£16,965.00	to be reviewed/2023 priority	
67	Overlay	C1069	Pooihoy to Wester	at Tister Bends	3	600	1800	15	£27,000.00	Complete	400
68	Overlay	C1033	Everley Crockster Toll	at Phillip Mains	3	100	300	15	£4,500.00	Complete	100
69	Overlay	C1247	Whitebridge Scarberrry	Harrow Harbour	3	670	2010	15	£30,150.00		
70	Overlay	C1021	Balnabruich Braemore	A couple of sections on the road	3	1767	5301	15	£79,515.00		
71	Overlay	B870	Plochan to Westerdale	Frameside	3	1100	3300	15	£49,500.00		
72	Overlay	B874	Watten Mains to Lochshell	Lower Gillock to Lochshell	4.5	1100	4950	15	£74,250.00		
73	Surface Dress	C1025	Sordale to Bishophill	at Bishophill Junction	3	230	690	3	£2,070.00	Complete	230
74	Surface Dress	C1069	Pooihoy to Wester	Durran Mains to Hoy Farm	3	1090	3270	3	£9,810.00	Complete	1090
75	Surface Dress	U1113	Achow Osdley	Whole road (exception Overlays above)	3	3700	11100	3	£33,300.00		
76	Surface Dress	U1109	Advcastle Shore	Whole road	3	834	2502	3	£7,686.00	Under review	
77	Surface Dress	48449	Kythmere-	Junction to just over bridge	3	206	3444	3	£6,324.00	Completed 2021	
78	Surface Dress	U1629	Mey Foreshore	East Junction to Highmeat House	3	1060	3180	3	£9,540.00	complete	1060
79	Surface Dress	U1629	Mey Foreshore	West Junction to sharp bend	3	1200	3600	3	£10,800.00	complete	1200
80	Surface Dress	U1633	Mey Riggs	Whole Road	3	755	2265	3	£6,795.00	Complete	755
81	Inlay	U3632	River Street	Roundsabout to flower shop	7.5	280	2100	18	£37,800.00		
82	Overlay	B870	Glenngly to Plochan	Calder	3	440	1320	15	£19,800.00		
83	Overlay	A836		Dunnit Beach	6.4	520	3328	15	£49,920.00		
84	Surface Dress	U4209	Sinclair Street	6m up the centre	6	230	1380	3	£4,140.00		
85	Surface Dress	U1626		Scarbkerry Junction to the old church	3	1520	4560	3	£13,680.00		
86	Surface Dress	U1408	Keiss Beach	Whole road	3	580	1740	3	£5,220.00		
87	Surface Dress	U1434	South Street Keiss	Whole road	3	365	1095	3	£3,285.00		
88	Overlay	U1913		Plochan Brawbin Road Plochan Junction	3	1140	3420	15	£51,300.00		
89	Surface Dress	U4084	Mayfield Road	Whole road	6	230	1380	3	£4,140.00		
90	Surface Dress	U4391	Burnett Place Thurso	Whole road	6	275	1650	3	£4,950.00		
91	Surface Dress	U2411	Menoville Road	Clyth	3	742	2226	3	£6,678.00		
92	Surface Dress	U1636		Hill Of Ratbar Below Farm To Scarbkerry Junc	3	870	2610	3	£7,830.00		
93	Surface Dress	C1033		Everley Crockster Toll Road From Phillip M	3	2100	6300	3	£18,900.00		
94	Surface Dress	C1033		Canisbay Memorial To Tresdale	3	770	2310	3	£6,930.00		
95	Surface Dress	U1609		Seater Canisbay Hill Of Warze Whole Road	5	1700	8500	3	£25,500.00		
96	Surface Dress	C1033		Everley Crockster Toll Road From Christian H	3	2000	6000	3	£18,000.00		

## Appendix E – BEAR / Transport Scotland

NW Trunk Road Unit Caithness and Sutherland		BEAR Scotland Works Programme 2022/23 (November22 update)				
Route	Scheme Name	Work Description	Start	Finish	Status	Value £
A99	A99 Lybster Footway Improvements	Footway Improvements	08/11/2021	20/04/2022	Complete	30,000
A9	A9 Dornoch to Latheron Sign Replacement	Signing Improvements	17/01/2022	11/07/2022	Complete	18,000
A9	A9 Dunrobin Castle to Cairn Liath Filter Drain	Filter Drain Refurbishment	07/03/2022	12/05/2022	Complete	30,000
A9	Navidale to Scrabster Roadmarkings	Road markings Refreshment	04/04/2022	18/11/2022	Ongoing	483,000
A9	Filter Drains	Filter Drain Replacement	04/04/2022	02/06/2022	Complete	56,000
A9	A9 Golspie Cat 2 Footway scheme	Footway Improvements	22/06/2022	15/07/2022	Complete	16,000
A9	A9 North of Poles	Carriageway Patching	13/06/2022	13/06/2022	Complete	23,000
A9	A9 South of Poles	Carriageway Patching	14/06/2022	14/06/2022	Complete	28,000
A9	A9 South of Helmsdale	Carriageway Patching	15/06/2022	20/06/2022	Ongoing	95,000
A9	A9 North End of Helmsdale	Carriageway Resurfacing	03/02/2023	09/02/2023	Not started	105,000
A9	A9 Dunrobin Retaining Wall	Retaining Wall Repairs	25/07/2022	12/08/2022	Complete	10,000
A9	A9 South of Brora	Carriageway Patching	28/06/2022	28/06/2022	Complete	28,000
A9	A9 North/South of Mound Junction	Carriageway Resurfacing	04/07/2022	07/07/2022	Complete	150,000
A99	A99 Lybster	Carriageway Resurfacing	10/07/2022	19/07/2022	Complete	160,000
A99	A99 Route Priority Signing Improvements	Signing Improvements	05/08/2022	13/09/2022	Complete	107,000
A9	A9 North Portgower	Carriageway Resurfacing	20/07/2022	26/07/2022	Complete	50,000
A9	A9 South of Scrabster	Carriageway Patching	03/04/2023	04/04/2023	Not started	50,000
A9	A9 Thurso Bridgend	Drainage Improvements	28/11/2022	09/12/2022	Not started	10,000
A99	A99 Whiterow to Wick - Filter Drains	Filter Drain Refurbishment	24/10/2022	11/11/2022	Ongoing	50,000
A9	A9 Helmsdale Footway	Footway Improvements	Design Only	Design Only	Not started	30,000