

**An Action Plan For Caithness and North  
Sutherland  
2007 - 2010**

**Snapshot 1  
December 2007**

## Introduction

When “A Strategy for Caithness and North Sutherland” was published in November 2006 it was the result of a wide-ranging public consultation exercise carried out by the Socio-economic Strategy group convened by Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise.

The strategy identified four main aims, supported by a number of more specific objectives. It made clear, however, that the delivery of these aims and objectives was the responsibility of a range of Governmental and non-Governmental organisations.

In the months since the publication of the strategy document, the four main aims have been developed into a more detailed set of priorities and actions which will help deliver the strong, diverse Caithness and North Sutherland economy we all want to see.

The priorities and actions have been informed by work commissioned by HIE Caithness and Sutherland and undertaken by CogentSI, which involved analysis of the local economy and demographics and in depth discussions with key stakeholders on priorities for the future. An analysis of the Caithness and North Sutherland business portfolio using the Boston Matrix also identified key development opportunities and confirmed that the opportunities highlighted within the strategy document were worthy of pursuit.

The Plan has also taken into account the wide ranging discussions centred on the Caithness Conference in September 2007.

## Delivery Structure

One immediate action identified in the strategy document was for resource to be allocated to the management of the strategy and implementation of the action plan.

Early in 2007 the four key public sector organisations with particular responsibility for maintaining and developing healthy and successful communities and economies in the area, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), The Highland Council (THC), The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and the Scottish Government joined forces to form the Caithness Regeneration Partnership with the specific remit of implementing the post Dounreay regeneration.

There are four key elements to the partnership structure – an advisory/stakeholders group, an executive board, a senior officers group, and dedicated staff resources.

The Executive Board, a small group of senior executives from the four partner organisations, will oversee delivery of the strategy and action plan, meeting on a quarterly basis. The Executive Board will be accountable for delivery of the strategy and action plan.

The Senior Officers Group, a team from within the key organisations will ensure that work is implemented. They have the responsibility to commit resources on behalf of their organisations and be accountable for the implementation of agreed actions and projects within specific timescales. This team will reflect the core membership of the Executive Board and will also involve other key partners – such as UKAEA and the North Highland College as required.

The Advisory/Stakeholder Group – a group representing a wide variety of local interests, will act as a ‘parliament’, meeting bi-annually, receiving quarterly reports on progress and offering feedback on behalf of local, regional and national interests.

Delivery is key to the successful future of the area and the partners recognise the need for additional dedicated staff resource to assist with the delivery of the strategy. As a result the partners have agreed to strengthen local resources to ensure that the necessary expertise is available.

## The Action Plan

This action plan sets out potential projects and activities for the following three years. The HIE Network has made a commitment of £12m towards the programme and this will be supplemented by other partners such as the Nuclear De-commissioning Authority (NDA), the Highland Council (THC) and the private sector.

The 50 actions are linked to 5 overarching priorities:

1. Investing in our Infrastructure and Services
2. Developing our Business and Industry Assets
3. Developing Our People
4. Developing Dounreay Assets
5. Developing New Opportunities through Inward Investment

These actions, together with the organisations who will implement their delivery, are set out in the following pages.

This action plan is a working document. It will be published and updated regularly to show progress being made, and amended as new opportunities are identified and circumstances change.

Some of the broader actions will require further detailed planning and development work once the initial actions are implemented. It is therefore likely that the lead partners for each of these actions will develop more detailed subject-specific action plans.

## Priority 1: Investing in Our Infrastructure and Services

The ability of the area to generate new economic activity will be influenced by the availability of physical infrastructure and services. Among these are the provision of business space, transport and telecoms improvements, and recreational facilities which will make the area attractive to those who live and work here and those we would seek to attract into the area. The following activities are highlighted under the action plan:

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
1.1	Proposed Centre for Energy and Environment	A new build property for a shared facility to drive forward environmental and energy development for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	HIE Network	£5-8m estimate	Detailed feasibility worked up Feb 08
1.2	Food Processing Units – Wick Industrial Estate and other locations	To build on successes such as the Mey Selections brand and add value to high quality local produce	HIE Network	Unknown at this stage. Estimate £1-2m	Demand study underway Jan/Feb 08
1.3	New Business Infrastructure in East Sutherland	New environmentally-friendly office development to attract inward investment to East Sutherland Develop new industrial site to meet identified local demand	HIE Network	Approx £2m office  £1-2m industrial site	Office available March 09  Sept 08
1.4	Transport Links – Rail	Assess line and infrastructure improvements on the North Highland line and implement where feasible	HRP/Network Rail/ Transport Scotland/ HITRANS/ THC	Unknown at this stage	Publication of Strategic Transport Projects Review by Transport Scotland summer 08 – to inform next steps
1.5	Transport Links – Road	Implement improvements to the A9 south	As 1.4	As 1.4	As 1.4
1.6	Transport Links – Air	Develop infrastructure and services at Wick Airport	HIAL	£ nil until further plans developed	Halcrow study on Air Discount Scheme in Caithness due Jan 08. To inform future action.
1.7	Transport links – Sea	Develop services and infrastructure at Scrabster and Wick including marina developments	Harbour Authorities	unknown at this stage, likely multi-million	Both Harbour Authorities developing detailed plans. Ongoing thro' 08/09

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
1.8	Broadband Telecoms	Upgrade remaining exchanges	HIE Network/BT	£215k	Keiss, John O'Groats, Dunbeath, Forss, upgraded to full ADSL March 08
1.9	Main towns Initiative	Economic initiatives to help re-vitalise Wick and Thurso including environmental enhancements and a retail initiative to inform future development directions	THC HIE C&S	Unknown at this stage	Finalise retail study Jan 08. Agree actions with partners March 08
1.10	Recreational Infrastructure	Undertake research into community facilities for the North eg indoor sports facility and implement	THC/NDA	Unknown at this stage	Consultant's report on facilities being considered by Caithness Members of THC Jan 08
1.11	Maintain and develop health and social care facilities to meet the needs of an ageing population	Develop projections of future needs and match to existing provision. Identify business opportunities arising	NHS Highland THC Community Health Partnership	Unknown at this stage	To be advised
1.12	Maintain and enhance range of public services delivered locally	Public agencies to develop a list of activities which currently are or potentially could be delivered from Caithness and identify new business opportunities	THC NHS Highland HIE C&S	£ nil at this stage	Identify opportunities by June 08

## Priority 2: Developing Our Business and Industry Assets

The existing business and industry base provides a number of opportunities for future development. These include existing infrastructure assets and key sectors such as food and drink. The Arts, culture and archaeology forms the basis for tourism potential, whilst assets such as the Caithness General Hospital may provide opportunities to develop new specialisms in remote health care delivery. The UHI will be an important asset over the coming years through the development of existing centres such as the ERI and DERC.

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
2.1	T3UK	Continue to develop the T3UK facility as a centre of excellence for de-commissioning.  Assist with diversification into Oil and Gas	NHC/UHI, HIE Network, NDA Private sector	£200k	Jan 08 initial meeting on Engineering Facilities.  Start marketing capacity to sector through Inward Investment marketing plan
2.2	Food and Drink	Continue to develop the Food & Drink sector including the Mey Selections brand to increase the range of products and their impact	North Highland Products HIE Network	£250k	Food & Drink Marketing Action Plan Jan 08
2.3	John O'Groats	Develop a major visitor attraction for this flagship site in Caithness. Formalise and further develop the Lands End to John O Groats Links	HIE Network Private sector	Unknown at this stage	Develop Options appraisal Jan/Feb 08
2.4	Archaeology	Develop tourism opportunities around this theme, also linking to Orkney	HIE Network Visit Scotland Caithness Archaeology Trust, THC	£400k	Castletown Analysis Centre March 08. Broch Centre start Spring 08. Future Development Plan Feb 08
2.5	The Arts	Continue to develop the cultural assets of the area including building on strengths such as Lybster and developing the legacy of 2007 Year of Highland Culture	THC, HIE Network Northlands Creative Glass Caithness Arts	Unknown at this stage	To be advised
2.6	Caithness General Hospital	Explore the options for developing research and training opportunities through links with the Centre for Health Science	NHS Highland HIE Network UHI	£100k	Pilot project for Care of Elderly March 08

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
2.7	Develop the UHI through ERI and DERC	Continue the growth and impact of ERI and DERC including the creation of new research opportunities	NHC/UHI/HIE Network	£500k	Provide additional research opportunities thro' Marine PhD programme. Sept 08
2.8	Develop the tourism assets of the North	Promote the North to visitors through coordinated development and marketing focused on activity based tourism, culture, the cruise market and including links to Food and Drink. Appoint dedicated manager to focus on development opportunities	North Highland Tourism Operators, Mey Selections, VisitScotland Harbour Authorities CASVAG, THC HIE Network	£150k £450k £300k	Appoint dedicated manager June 08  Implement Marketing Plan Jan 08  Establish North Highland Connections Ltd Feb 08
2.9	Developing businesses of scale	Enhanced support for potential high growth companies through bespoke support packages	HIE Network, SDI	Unknown at this stage	Core business for HIE C&S
2.10	Development of Renewable Energy Opportunities	Enhance opportunities for renewable energy developments and build on existing strengths eg Wick CHP, Pentland Firth collaboration with EMEC. Develop a Marine Energy Project with a dedicated project manager to develop infrastructure and supply chain necessary to deploy and support devices in the Pentland Firth and elsewhere.	HIE Network/EMEC /NDA	£250k	Appoint Marine Project Manager start Jan 2008
2.11	Internationalisation of existing businesses	Work with key companies to encourage them to develop new export markets	HIE Network/SDI Key local and regional businesses	£150k	Series of workshops and learning journeys thro'08  Links closely with Action 5.10.

### Priority 3: Developing Our People

The skills and abilities of the workforce are vital in driving business competitiveness across the north. Those leaving Dounreay are highly skilled in areas where there are national skills shortages such as technical and engineering skills. The young people of the area are a key asset and their engagement in the future of the area's economy will be crucial through initiatives in schools and after tertiary education.

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
3.1	Graduate Placements	Promote and enhance the existing graduate placement scheme to encourage young people to take up local opportunities	HIE Network, NDA	£300k	Annual Graduate Placement Programme
3.2	Employment brokerage service	Establish a new brokerage for the North linking skills with opportunities within the area and beyond eg offshore opportunities	HIE Network, Job Centre Plus, NDA Private Sector	£ nil at this stage	Investigate existing provision in private sector by March 08
3.3	Company skills programmes/Management development	Encourage existing businesses to improve workforce and managerial skills	HIE Network/private sector	£ included in HIE C&S annual budget	Core business for HIE C&S
3.4	Hospitality Assured	Enhance provision of HA for tourism businesses	HIE Network	£100k	Customer satisfaction pilot 08
3.5	Skills development through NHC/UHI	Encourage development of new skills programmes by the College/UHI eg Renewables	NHC	£200k	New 1 yr MSc. in Renewables, thro' research, accredited by Aberdeen Uni. 1 <sup>st</sup> graduates Dec 07. Graduate placement programme for Renewables. Planning to extend both into 08
3.6	Young people and entrepreneurship	Enhance work with schools and PSYBT to encourage business start-ups among young people	THC/HIE Network/Skills Development Scotland	Unknown at this stage	To be advised
3.7	Increasing the opportunities from demographic change	Enhance opportunities for learning and skills to meet the needs of and among older people.	THC/HIE Network/NDA	Unknown at this stage	To be advised

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
3.8	Business Networks	Encourage the development of collaborative bodies in the North eg Caithness Contractors Group, Fusion and Chambers of Commerce. Provision of part time officer	Private sector/Business groups	£60k	Explore options Jun 08
3.9	Develop and Attract Appropriate Skills	Audit existing skills and promote skills development to meet future needs. Attract new highly skilled individuals to the area	HIE Network, THC Talent Scotland	£200k	Undertake Skills Audit Jun 08
3.10	Promotion of Science and Technology	Work with schools to increase impact of Caithness Science festival	THC/HIE Network	£20k	Annual festival
3.11	Facilitate the development of a more dynamic labour market	Work with adults in work and out of work to develop career planning skills	HIE Network	£80k	Plan-It Programme at UKAEA

## Priority 4: Developing Dounreay assets

The expertise and motivation of the Dounreay workforce provides the basis for a strong economic future. Measures to encourage business start-ups and to develop local companies involved as contractors on the Dounreay site to internationalise will form part of this theme. In addition contractors will be encouraged to collaborate and win new opportunities world wide. Global contractors with a presence on site will also be encouraged to look for opportunities to bring other aspects of their operations to this area.

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
4.1	Advice and information for new and existing businesses	Assistance to companies in the Dounreay supply chain to help diversify their business base	HIE Network NDA SMAS	£ included in HIE C&S annual budget	Core business for HIE C&S
4.2	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority support	Enhanced support activity from the NDA eg Nuclear Archive establishment,  North Highland Regeneration Fund  National Nuclear Skills Academy	NDA/NHC	£ unknown at this stage  £1.5m  £ unknown at this stage	To be advised  Additional loan funding agreed Dec 07  To be advised
4.3	Promote start-up of companies by Dounreay employees	Business advice, information and finance	HIE Network	£ included in HIE C&S annual budget	Core business for HIE C&S
4.4	Exploit and internationalise existing expertise at Dounreay	Promote DSRL and associated supply chain as world leaders in decommissioning to the rest of the world	DSRL Caithness Contractors HIE Network NDA	£ nil at this stage	Research into market opportunity completed March 08
4.5	Consolidate existing contractor base in Caithness	Engage with national and international contractors to identify opportunities which could be delivered from a Caithness base	Private Sector HIE C&S	£ included in HIE C&S annual budget	Core business for HIE C&S
4.6	Maximise future use of site infrastructure	Through site end state process ensure that appropriate infrastructure is retained for future use	DSRL NDA	Unknown at this stage	Site End State Consultation completed. Being integrated into Life-Time Plan 08

## Priority 5: Developing New Opportunities through inward investment

The attraction of new businesses to the area will form a significant part of the regeneration programme. In an increasingly competitive market the North will have to compete on the strength of its high quality labour force and environment. There are already exemplars which have been attracted to the area and lessons from these projects and elsewhere will form a major part of this theme. In addition expertise from around the world will be accessed to drive forward future opportunities.

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
5.1	Appoint a new Inward Investment Executive	A dedicated resource to assist in driving forward new investment in the area	HIE Network	£200k total over 3 years	Roy Kirk appointed Aug 07
5.2	Develop an inward investment strategy	Research and assess new opportunities for the area	HIE Network SDI	£ nil at this stage	Inward Investment North Highland Marketing Plan completed Nov 07
5.3	Promote Caithness as a place to live and work	Research key messages for branding the North to attract investment and people	THC HIE Network NDA SDI	£ nil at this stage	Included in Marketing Plan, action by March 08
5.4	Create an international advisory Board	Use the Global Scot network to create a group of individuals with links to the area who can advise on strategy	HIE Network GlobalScot Network SDI	£25k	Included in Marketing Plan, action by early 08
5.5	North Highland Branding	Explore links between Mey Selections, North Highland Tourism and Inward Investment branding for the area	HIE Network, THC, private sector	£ nil at this stage	Links identified Mar 08
5.6	Build on existing assets	Use existing exemplars and opportunities from existing supply chain to foster new employment eg public and private sector back offices	HIE Network, SDI	£10k	Included in Marketing Plan, creation of case studies Jun 08

No	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
5.7	Lobby for public sector jobs dispersal	Work with local and national public sector dispersal opportunities	The Highland Council HIE Network Scottish Government Office of Government and Commerce	£ nil at this stage	Included in Marketing Plan, ongoing activity over 3 years
5.8	Aftercare for existing inward investors	Meet with HQs of current inward investment companies and develop future plans	HIE Network	£ included in HIE C&S annual budget	Core business for HIE C&S
5.9	Media Campaign	Raise the profile of the area for inward investment	HIE Network SDI	£250k	Included in Marketing Plan, ongoing over 3 years
5.10	Undertake outward missions to internationalise local businesses	Assist local businesses to sell their products and expertise overseas	HIE Network SDI Embassy Network	£100k	Included in Marketing Plan, learning journeys, trade missions & exhibitions
5.11	Undertake learning journeys	Encourage local partners to visit similar areas affected by industrial closures and assess inward investment activities	HIE Network The Highland Council NDA	£25k	Included in marketing Plan, leadership learning journey 08

## Glossary

BT	British Telecom
CASVAG	Caithness & Sutherland Visitor Attraction Group
DSRL	Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd
EMEC	European Marine Energy Centre
HIAL	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd
HIE	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
HIE C&S	HIE Caithness & Sutherland
HRP	Highland Rail Partnership
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
NHC	North Highland College
NHS	National Health Service
SDI	Scottish Development International
SMAS	Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service
THC	The Highland Council
UHIMI	University of the Highlands & Islands Millennium Institute
UKAEA	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority