

**Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership**

# **An Action Plan for Caithness and North Sutherland 2007 - 2010**

**Snapshot 3  
June 2008**

**Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership  
T3UK, Janetstown, Thurso KW14 7XF  
Phone 01847 890017  
Email eann.sinclair@hient.co.uk**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Snapshot 3 of the Action Plan!

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 wide-ranging discussions that took place at 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 & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership with the specific remit of implementing the post-Dounreay regeneration process.

There are four key elements to the partnership structure – an Advisory Board, an Executive Board, a senior officers group, and dedicated staff resources.

The Advisory Board chaired by The Highland Council Convener – 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.

The Executive Board, with an independent chair, is a small group of senior executives from the four partner organisations. It oversees delivery of the strategy and action plan, and meets on a quarterly basis. The Executive Board is accountable for delivery of the strategy and action plan.

The Senior Officers Group is a team from within the key organisations. It will ensure that work is implemented. The group has the responsibility to commit resources on behalf of its member organisations, and is accountable for the implementation of agreed 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.

Delivery of the Plan is key to the successful future of the area and the partners recognise the need for additional dedicated staff resource to assist with this. As a result the partners have agreed to strengthen local resources to ensure that the necessary expertise is available. Co-ordination of the Action Plan's delivery is provided by CNSRP through its Programme Manager Eann Sinclair and Administrator Eilidh Gunn.

## **The Action Plan**

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

The actions in the Plan 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 responsible for implementing their delivery, are set out in the following pages.

This Action Plan is a working document. It will be updated regularly to show progress being made, and may be amended as new opportunities are identified or when circumstances change. This version is updated from the previous version, published in March 2008.

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.

## **Actions achieved since Snapshot 2**

Some of the original 50 actions in the Plan have been achieved. They have been separately listed as an Appendix at the end of this document.

## 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 Partner	£	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	£13m estimate	Discussions ongoing with Partners. Update Sept. 08
1.2	Transport Links – Rail	Assess line and infrastructure improvements on the North Highland line and implement where feasible	HITRANS	Unknown at this stage	Publication of Strategic Transport Projects Review by Transport Scotland summer 08 – to inform next steps
1.3	Transport Links – Road	Implement improvements to the A9	HITRANS	As 1.2	As 1.2
1.4	Transport Links – Air	Develop infrastructure and services at Wick Airport including ILS/GPS	HIAL	£ nil until further plans developed	ILS costings & feasibility completed. High Intensity approach lighting system to be priced. Business case being made.
1.5	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 Announcements expected 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr 08
1.6	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	Unknown at this stage	Finalised retail study Jan 08 in public domain. Steering group formed March08 and working on initial leaflet for cruise market.
1.7	Recreational Infrastructure	Undertake research into community facilities for the North eg indoor sports	THC, NDA	Unknown at this stage	Discussions ongoing with regard to indoor sports

		sports facility and implement			facilities at Halkirk
1.8	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	Needs assessments and provision mapped – opportunities for innovative solutions being actively pursued. Update on progress by Sep 08.
1.9	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	£ nil at this stage	One potential service being targeted at present. Progress report in Sep 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.

No	Project	Outline	Key Partner	£	Milestone Dates
2.1	T3UK	Continue to develop the T3UK facility as a centre of excellence for engineering. Assist with diversification into Oil and Gas	HIE, SDI	£200k	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	NHP, HIE	£250k	Draft Food & Drink Marketing Action Plan produced Taste of Caithness & Sutherland event planned for Autumn 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, Private sector	Unknown at this stage	Open day held Feb 08. Master Plan options to be developed by Autumn 08
2.4	Archaeology	Develop tourism opportunities around this theme, also linking to Orkney	CAT, VS, THC	£100k	Broch Centre start Autumn 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	Caithness Arts, North Highland Connections, THC	Unknown at this stage	Development proposals prepared for St. Mary's Church, Lybster.
2.6	Caithness General Hospital	Explore the options for developing research and training opportunities through links with the Centre for Health Science	UHIMI	£100k	Work underway to identify future income streams for Lyth Arts centre Northern Periphery Programme approval in place. Project 'Older 4 Older' (O4O) commenced.
2.7	Develop the UHI	Continue the growth and impact of ERI including the creation of new research opportunities	NHC, UHIMI	£500k	Provide additional research opportunities thro' Marine PhD programme. Sept 08

2.8	Develop the tourism assets of the North	<p>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.</p> <p>Appoint dedicated manager to focus on development opportunities</p>	NHT, Mey Selections, VS, THC, HIE	£150k
2.9	Development of Renewable Energy Opportunities	<p>Enhance opportunities for renewable energy developments and build on existing strengths eg Wick CHP, Pentland Firth collaboration with Orkney.</p> <p>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.</p>	HIE, Crown Estate, Private Sector	<p>Inward mission held with 10 potential inward investors, May 08</p> <p>Pentland Firth stand at All-Energy Conference, May 08</p> <p>Tocardo Tidal Energy Ltd announce new jobs in Wick</p>

### 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 Partner	£	Milestone Dates
3.1	Employment brokerage service	Establish a new brokerage for the North linking skills with opportunities within the area and beyond eg offshore opportunities	HIE, Job Centre Plus, NDA Private Sector	£ nil at this stage	Now merged with Action 3.6
3.2	Skills development through NHC/UHI	Encourage development of new skills programmes by the College/UHI eg Renewables	NHC UHMI	£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
3.3	Young people and entrepreneurship	Enhance work with schools and PSYBT to encourage business start-ups among young people	THC, SDS	Unknown at this stage	To be advised
3.4	Increasing the opportunities from demographic change	Enhance opportunities for learning and skills to meet the needs of and among older people.	THC, HIE, NDA	Unknown at this stage	To be advised
3.5	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	New model for Caithness Chamber of Commerce being developed. Relaunch of Chamber by Sep 08.
3.6	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, SDS	£200k	Undertake Skills Audit by Dec 08

3.7	Facilitate the development of a more dynamic labour market	Work with adults in work and out of work to develop career planning skills	SDS	£unknown	To be advised

#### 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 Partner	£	Milestone Dates
4.1	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority support	Enhanced support activity from the NDA eg Nuclear Archive establishment, North Highland Regeneration Fund National Nuclear Skills Academy	NDA, THC NewPark  NDA, NHC	£ 8m £1.5m  £ unknown at this stage	Announced Feb 08 for Wick Additional loan funding agreed Dec 07 Project Manager appointed
4.2	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, NDA	£ nil at this stage	SDI activity ongoing with several companies.
4.3	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	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 Partner	£ nil at this stage	Milestone Dates
5.1	Promote Caithness as a place to live and work	Research key messages for branding the North to attract investment and people	HIE, SDI	£ nil at this stage	Key messages developed. Marine energy materials produced: other sectoral materials being developed throughout summer 08.
5.2	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	£25k	Early discussions taken place. Now being taken forward through existing national level advisory group.
5.3	North Highland Branding	Explore links between Mey Selections, North Highland Tourism and Inward Investment branding for the area	HIE	£ nil at this stage	Links established and will continue to be developed.
5.4	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, SDI	£10k	Included in Marketing Plan, creation of case studies by Dec 08
5.6	Lobby for public sector jobs dispersal	Work with local and national public sector dispersal opportunities	HIE	£ nil at this stage	Ongoing activity over 3 years. Initial contact made with Scottish & UK Departments, to be followed up by new Inward Investment Executive by Dec 08.
5.7	Media Campaign	Raise the profile of the area for inward investment	HIE, SDI	£250k	Profile of John O'Groats & Pentland Firth currently being used widely by national media. Mike McCartney photographic project May 08

				Caithness Conference to be held Sep 08 with First Minister attending
5.8	Undertake outward missions to internationalise local businesses	Assist local businesses to sell their products and expertise overseas	HIE, SDI Embassy Network	£100k Included in Marketing Plan, learning journeys, trade missions & exhibitions
5.9	Undertake learning journeys	Encourage local partners to visit similar areas affected by industrial closures and assess inward investment activities	HIE, NDA	£25k Learning journeys continue during 08. 1 <sup>st</sup> Learning Journey to USA completed March 08

## Appendix 1: Glossary

BT	British Telecom
CAT	Caithness Archaeological Trust
CNSRP	Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
CASVAG	Caithness & Sutherland Visitor Attraction Group
DSRL	Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd
EMEC	European Marine Energy Centre
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERI	Environmental Research Institute
HIAL	Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd
HIE	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
HITRANS	Highlands & Islands Transport Authority
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
NHC	North Highland College
NHS	National Health Service
NHP	North Highland Products Ltd
NHT	North Highland Tourism Operators Ltd
SDI	Scottish Development International
SG	Scottish Government
SMAS	Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
THC	The Highland Council
UHMI	University of the Highlands & Islands Millennium Institute
VS	VisitScotland
Wick CHaP	Wick Combined Heat and Power

## Appendix 2: Actions Achieved

**Completed actions are listed under each of the five original priorities identified in the Plan.**

Priority	Project	Outline	Key Partners	£	Milestone Dates
1	Broadband telecoms	Upgrade key remaining exchanges	HIE/ BT	£215k	Keiss, John O' Groats, Dunbeath, Forss upgraded to full ADSL in April 08
1	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	Unknown at this stage	Finalised retail study Jan 08 in public domain. Steering group will be formed March 08
2	John O' Groats	Develop a major visitor attraction for this flagship site in Caithness	HIE/ Private Sector	Unknown at this stage	Community Open Day held February 08
2	Archaeology	Develop tourism opportunities around this theme, also linking to Orkney	HIE, VS, THC, CAT	£400k	Castletown Analysis Centre opened April 08. CAT Future Development Plan completed February 08.
2	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 Northlands Creative Glass Caithness Arts	£750k £75k	Develop proposals for St. Mary's Church, Lybster by June 08 North Highland Connections Product Development Director recruited April 08
2	Caithness General Hospital	Explore the options for developing research and training opportunities through links with the Centre for Health Science.	NHS Highland, HIE, UHMI	£100k	Northern Periphery Programme approval in place (Jan 08). "Older 4 Older" project commenced.
2	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 & drink	NHT, Mey Selections, VS, Harbour Authorities, CASVAG, THC, HIE	£450k	NHT Marketing Plan launched in London March 08 North Highland Connections Ltd established Feb 08,

				Development Director appointed April 08.
2	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, EMEC, NDA, Private Sector  £250k	Marine Project Manager appointed Feb 08  Conference held Edinburgh Feb 08 attended by First Minister.  Inward mission by 15 companies Feb 08
3	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	Report commissioned on future Chamber of Commerce activity.
3	Facilitate the development of a more dynamic labour market	Work with adults in work and out of work to develop career planning skills	HIE  £80k	Plan-It Programme at UKAEA
4	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority support	Enhanced support activity from the NDA eg Nuclear Archive establishment, North Highland Regeneration Fund	NDA, NHC  £1.5m	Announced Feb 08 for Wick Additional loan funding agreed Dec 07
5	Appoint a new Inward Investment Executive	A dedicated resource to assist in driving forward new investment in the area	HIE  £200k total over 3 years	Roy Kirk appointed Aug 07
5	Develop an inward investment strategy	Research and assess new opportunities for the area	HIE, SDI  £ nil at this stage	Inward Investment North Highland Marketing Plan completed Nov 07.
5	Undertake learning journeys	Encourage local partners to visit similar areas affected by industrial closures and assess inward investment activities	HIE, THC, NDA  £25k	Included in marketing Plan, leadership learning journey 08. 1 <sup>st</sup> Learning Journey to USA completed March 08