

CAITHNESS AND SUTHERLAND LOCAL ECONOMIC FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 5th SEPTEMBER 2001 AT 10.30AM

IN THE LINKS HOTEL, BRORA

PRESENT: Robert MacLennan (Chairman)
Hilda Morrison (Caithness Business Club)
John Banister (Caithness and Sutherland Chamber of Commerce)
Winifred Sutherland (Federation of Small Businesses)
Sue Whitelegge (Employment Service - representing John Dennison)
Hugh Logan (North Highland College)
Jack Watson (CASE)
Joan Campbell (Sutherland Partnership)
Duncan Allan (Highland Council, Sutherland)
Sandra McCaughey (CASE - representing Carroll Buxton)
David Noble (Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board)

IN ATTENDANCE: Gordon Todd (Highland Council, Sutherland)
Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler (Caithness Partnership)
Angus Mackay (Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Angus MacCall (NFU/SCU), John Rosie (Highland Council, Caithness), Brian Whitelaw (Highland Council, Caithness), Alison Magee (Chair, Sutherland Partnership), Graeme McLaughlin (Highland Council, Sutherland), Pat Buchanan (Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board) and George Bruce (Caithness Partnership).

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 17TH AUGUST 2001

Under **Item 4, para 5, Gordon Todd** questioned the wording of the sentence which read, "The working groups would be formed from the Forum and appoint a Chairman". It was agreed after discussion that the working groups could appoint a Chairman if they wished however there was agreement that the previous meeting had recognised the need for Rapporteurs, to provide feedback to the main Forum

3 MATTERS ARISING

John Banister pointed out there was no reference to the £2k previously offered by CASE towards the cost of questionnaire process expenses. **Jack Watson** confirmed that this offer was still available and its omission was an oversight in the minute.

Hugh Logan reported final preparations were being made to the LEF website, and that they were awaiting confirmation of the domain name (northhighlandforum.org). The site was available however, prior to going public under its own domain name, accessible via the North Highland College website. **The Chairman** clarified that he felt it was more acceptable to issue a press release when the website was up and running, by which time we could invite people, in the press release, to visit the site. This would also be an opportunity to ask the public to respond and offer their opinions.

There followed a discussion on the Performance Measurement & Target Setting seminar held in Nairn on 28th August 2001. Members of the Forum, who had attended the seminar, felt some aspects of the presentation needed clarification. The Chairman reminded the Forum that Scottish Executive officials had

made themselves available for discussion on any issues which arose. He also felt the Nairn seminar had strengthened the need for the Forum to put clear views forward.

4 DISCUSSION ON DRAFT MAPPING EXERCISE

The Chairman thanked Sandra McCaughey for all her work in producing the draft mapping document, which contained a great deal of information, in a concise format.

Hugh Logan felt it may be useful to devise some kind of flowchart system for use with the document. **The Chairman** reminded the Forum that the end users are very varied and that it would be essential to define the potential users first.

Sandra McCaughey reminded the Forum of the need to build in quality issues and indicators. It was agreed the Mapping Document has generated the need for a framework to deal with gap and quality issues and that it would be sensible for all Forum members to gather views from the various business groups and partnerships to form an outline for the next meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Forum of the resource difficulties of formulating a draft Action Plan. He then offered, with secretarial assistance, to ensure the consultation process worked. He invited individual Forum members to contact him as soon as possible with their proposals and comments.

Jack Watson then offered Sandra McCaughey's services to The Chairman towards the drafting of the Action Plan.

In summary, **The Chairman** confirmed the agreed position of the Forum in that the Action Plan should start with identifying the range of services required and those offered, and by whom before proceeding to evaluate the quality, gaps and any overlap.

ACTION: ALL

5 SURVEY PROCESS

There followed a discussion, including a 'round the table' ideas session, on the content for a questionnaire to be used in the survey process. It was agreed the setting of the questions was a key factor in the success of such an undertaking.

It was agreed it would be appropriate to appoint an independent and experienced consultant to undertake the survey process. Impartiality is essential. During a discussion regarding the appointment of a consultant **Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler** offered to contact the Institute of Management Consultants (Scotland) and the Institute of Personnel Management on the Forums behalf to seek a list of their members. It was also agreed that the sum of £2k (available from CASE) would not likely meet the costs of the development and delivery of the survey process and that all Forum members would consider possible sources of funding. **Duncan Allan** said that he was not in a position to commit funds on behalf of the council but promised to help if at all possible. **The Chairman** asked all present to contact either Sandra McCaughey or himself with any offers or suggestions of sources of funding. The business representatives, CASE and the Highland Council were asked to provide, from their own resources, lists of relevant businesses to be contacted.

ACTION: ALL

Hugh Logan asked if the questionnaires would be conducted by interview or sent 'cold'. **The Chairman** indicated that there would be a combination of these approaches. **The Chairman** agreed with the suggestion of Hugh Logan that he should write an informative covering letter urging participation in the exercise.

ACTION: THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman said he would like to circulate the draft questionnaire to the Forum within the next 10 days (15th September).

Hugh Logan suggested the Forum consider distributing stamped addressed envelopes with the questionnaires to be posted. This was agreed of a means of attaining a higher response level.

6 A.O.C.B.

1. **Gordon Todd** said he would provide Sandra McCaughey with material to be included in the Mapping document.

ACTION: GORDON TODD

2. **The Chairman** told the group it would be essential that they addressed the broad issues for the 1st draft of the Action Plan at the next meeting and he suggested 'round the table' feedback for that date. **Hugh Logan** asked that the Minute of the meeting remind members to be prepared to express opinions at the next meeting.

ACTION: ALL

3. The date of the next meeting, 28th September 2001 was confirmed. The venue will be The Links Hotel, Brora. The meeting will commence at 10.30am.

ANGUS D MACKAY
5th September 2001