

Minutes of the fourteenth Local Economic Forum meeting held on Tuesday 28th October 2003 in the St. Catherine Suite at the Shetland Hotel, Lerwick, Shetland.

Members Present:

Jimmy Smith, Federation of Small Businesses (in the Chair)
Ann Black (Shetland Enterprise Company)
Alec Miller (Shetland Community Enterprise Network)
Mike Robertson (4QL/FUSION)
Councillor Cecil Eunson (SIC)
Victor Sandison (Lerwick Port Authority)
Brian Isbister (Shetland Fish Producer's Organisation)
Janet Davidge (Shetland Retailer's Association)
David Sandison (Shetland Salmon Farmer's Association) Executive Support: Kay Smith (Train Shetland)
Douglas Irvine (SIC Development Department)
Robin Lingard (Kinnairdie Consulting)
Stuart Nickerson (Shetland Enterprise Company), Minutes Secretary.

INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed all present.

Apologies have been received from: Ruth Henderson (Seafood Shetland), Drew Ratter (Councillor, SIC), Jacqui Watt (SIC Community Services Department), Emma Perring (SIC Chief Executive's Office), Paul Dymond (BP), Laurence Tulloch (Shetland Islands Tourism), Jim Budge (Director, SEC), Frank Miller (Shetland Knitwear Trades' Association), Gordon Dargie (Shetland College), Sandy Cluness (S.I.C.), Maggie Gemmill (Jobcentre Plus), Neil Grant (Shetland Development Trust), Joe Irvine (University of the Highlands & Islands) and Andy Carter (Careers Scotland).

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16th JUNE 2003

The minutes of this meeting were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 Follow up to Scottish Executive visit on 16th June Robin Lingard reported that 89% of actions in the current LEF Action Plan had been met. The original LEF plan intended to reduce overlap and increase the efficiency of economic development services. The alignment of Shetland Islands Council (SIC) and Shetland Enterprise's (SE) respective economic development services is a key factor in this process. A useful practical step, identified in the original Action Plan, would be to ensure that both organisations placed the same requirements on applicants for financial information.

Action: Report to next meeting on alignment of S.I.C and SE economic development services and in particular on aligning their requirements for information from applicants (Ann & Douglas).

3.2 Progress report on re-organisation of SIC Economic Development services Douglas Irvine reported that a renewable energy team had been established within the Economic Development Unit for large-scale wind-energy projects and other renewable energy projects that arise. The team consists of two project officers concentrating on the renewable energy sector. Cecil Eunson asked the Chair if mechanical 'wear and tear' had been taken into consideration with regard to wind-farm equipment.

The meeting heard from Jim Smith that this had been taken into consideration for all types of mechanical equipment associated with renewable energy and provided an opportunity for Shetland to specialise in the maintenance of such equipment. He also stated that depreciation of mechanical equipment due to 'wear and tear' had been accounted for in revenue calculations.

LEF MEMBERSHIP

Jim Smith reported that there had been a considerable increase in LEF membership, which now stood at twenty core members and six invited members (now termed as Executive Support). Robin Lingard stated that more than 50% of the LEF membership were representatives of the private sector, in line with LEF targets set out by the Scottish Executive. The meeting also heard that some LEF members may have both public and private sector interests, for example councillors who may also have interests in private companies.

PRESENTATION ON SHETLAND PORTAL WEB-SITE

(Mike Robertson) The meeting heard that the website's objective was to improve the quality of Shetland's image using a high quality, sophisticated web-site. The Shetland Portal was a result of the Shetland 2012 strategy document. The three target audiences for the Shetland Portal are as follows:

- Those with little or no knowledge of Shetland
- Expatriate Shetlanders
- Local Community.

The Shetland Portal is not a commercial website in that nothing is sold, there are no adverts and it is commercially independent. The rationale is to guarantee equal representation for people involved without being biased towards companies through advertising.

Shetland Portal should be seen as supporting other web-sites not as competition. Goals by end of 2003

- Website is to be open to the public within the next two weeks
- To have in place a smart web-site that promotes Shetland to the world as a place of sensitivity, resource and quality.
- To provide a search facility of all Shetland web-sites
- To provide a definitive list of businesses, products and events
- To be well ranked in the major search engines to support the goods and services of Shetland

The Shetland Portal web-site is intended to be a 'first-hit' web-site only, with users then accessing the individual web-sites directly, after being sign-posted to them by the Shetland Portal.

Benefits to Shetland Businesses

- Additional source of 'hits'
- Free services to enhance web-sites
- Free additional advertising on the Internet
- Re-inforce Shetland brand by association

Douglas Irvine explained that an 'origin device' was a country of origin emblem. Mike Robertson explained that Google 'ranking' was based on appropriate links between pages. If a

web-page has a higher number of links, it will move higher up the rankings. Shetland Portal has acquired a number of domain names, which will help the Shetland Portal move higher up the Google rankings.

Ann Black asked if there were links from Shetland business's web-sites back to the Shetland Portal to encourage users of the site to look at other businesses in Shetland. Mike Robertson reported that they were actively encouraging companies to include links to the Shetland Portal on their web-sites. Jimmy Smith commented that the same process could be applied to schools' web-sites through S.I.C. Robin Lingard requested that Trade & Professional Associations had an active role in encouraging their members to use the Shetland Portal and implement web-links to the site.

Alec Miller asked if the web-site was available in different languages. Mike Robertson reported that the web-site was only available in English at present, but that the software had sufficient capacity for the web-site to be delivered with an option of foreign languages. This depends on funding issues at present. Douglas Irvine added that there is an established annual budget for up-grading the site ensuring that it will change and develop as the project proceeds. This could include the introduction of foreign language facilities.

SKILLS & LEARNING SUB-GROUP

The minutes of the last two meetings of the LEF Skills & Learning Sub-group were presented to the Forum for information. Robin Lingard reported on the progress of the LEF Skills & Learning Sub-group. The meeting heard that the work of the group was concentrated under five main headings:

(1) INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOR LEARNERS

- As a start, a Guide to Local Learning Opportunities was compiled and was issued in May 2003

(2) LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

- This will include analysis of available sectoral skills projections and commissioning of new surveys as necessary

(3) MEETING SPECIFIC SKILLS NEEDS

- CPD & Management development
- ICT
- Customer Care
- Entrepreneur-ship

(4) DEVELOPING THE LEARNING INDUSTRY

- Recognising the learning sector in Shetland as an industry in itself

(5) TARGET GROUPS

- Young people (particularly those requiring a more vocational approach within secondary schooling).
- Those who can be attracted to Shetland from other parts of the UK and beyond (particularly for higher education and research).

- Those who may feel socially excluded (particularly those whose needs have been identified through the process of Community Learning and Development planning).

LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The meeting heard a progress report on the implementation of the Shetland 2012 strategy from Douglas Irvine. Robin Lingard stated that Shetland's LEF Action Plan compared favourably with other LEF Action Plans on the Scottish Executive web-site, as it addressed the needs of Shetland thoroughly. He also proposed that the Skills section of the strategy was aligned with the five headings being used by the LEF Skills & Learning Sub-group, highlighted earlier in the meeting.

The 'origin device' was discussed again in this part of the meeting. Cecil Eunson asked why Shetland needed such a device. Jimmy Smith stated that the device was needed to ensure that Shetland products could be identified easily by the international market, in a similar way to the New Zealand 'fern'.

Douglas Irvine added that the key element to the success of the origin device was having a quality control structure in place to award the device to products that met a specific standard of quality. The branding exercise is to be a 'quality control' process, rather than simply a 'membership' for Shetland products.

Mike Robertson told the meeting that the most important feature of broadband to Shetland businesses was the changes that it would make to the way that business is done. Broadband itself is not the significant advantage, rather than how it will change the nature of communications between businesses. This aspect of broadband needs to be promoted and emphasised.

Douglas Irvine reported that a project was being pursued by Roy Longmuir (e-business adviser at Shetland Enterprise) that would demonstrate the advantages of broadband to businesses and communities.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Ann Black reported that a draft of the proposed Community Plan was presently in the consultation phase and a copy had been passed to Shetland Enterprise.

COMMUNICATIONS

The meeting heard that Robin Lingard was to give a presentation to the Federation of Small Businesses on behalf of the LEF that evening.

A report on the LEF web-site had been compiled and was included in the Meeting papers.

All minutes and papers from LEF meetings are available for public viewing on the web-site and evidence from the report suggests that they are accessed frequently.

PROGRESS REPORT TO THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Robin Lingard reported that Mike McElhinney was shortly to leave his post at the Scottish Executive and had asked for a report from the LEF by the end of October 2003.

A draft report on progress towards Year Two of the Action Plan was enclosed in the meeting papers.

Research and development sector representation on the LEF has been fulfilled by Mike Robertson (FUSION) and new member Joe Irvine (UHIMI).

The meeting heard that S.I.C. Development and Shetland Enterprise would discuss the development of a 'Single-Entry Point' for the organisations as part of the Year Two strategy.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jim Smith reported back to the meeting on his recent visit to the 'Renewable Realities' conference in Orkney. The meeting heard that Orkney was currently very active in the area of renewable energy. The considerable interest in finding sites for tidal generators could be used to Shetland's advantage by attracting inward investment from the renewable energy sector. Overall, the sector is opening up and there is considerable interest in renewable energy, with possibilities for development in Shetland

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Local Economic Forum will be held in the **Shetland Hotel at 2:00pm on Tuesday 2nd December 2003**