

## **Minutes of the first Local Economic Forum meeting held on Tuesday 3rd July 2001 at the Shetland Business Innovation Centre, Gremista, Lerwick, Shetland.**

### **Members Present:**

Brian Anderson Shetland Enterprise Company, (Chair)  
David Finch, Shetland Enterprise Company  
Sandy Cluness, Shetland Islands Council  
Gordon Dargie, Shetland College  
David Sandison, Shetland Salmon Farmers' Association  
Ruth Henderson, Shetland Fish Processors' Association

### **By Invitation:**

Douglas Irvine, SIC Development Department  
Alvin Bashforth, SIC Development Department  
Robin Lingard, Kinnairdie Consulting  
Ann Black, Shetland Enterprise Company (Secretary)

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Jim Smith (Federation of Small Businesses), Gordon Johnson (North Atlantic Fisheries College), Alec Miller (Shetland Community Enterprise Network), Brian Isbister (Shetland Fishermen's Association), Robert Smith (Shetland Islands Tourism), Rob Anderson (SIC), and Gussie Angus (SIC).

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

#### **(i) Chair and Secretary**

The Chairman explained that the National Guidelines stated that the Local Enterprise Company should chair the first meeting. He suggested this should be extended to the second meeting, to allow the LEF to become established and arrangements reviewed thereafter. In his absence, David Finch would act as Chair. Members present agreed.

The Chairman said that Ann Black (Deputy Chief Executive, SEC) would be the Secretary for the duration of the life of Shetland's Local Economic Forum.

#### **(ii) Web-site**

There is a Scottish Executive requirement for papers, minutes, progress and action plans to be posted on a local web-site that is linked to the national LEF web-site. The web-site for Shetland will be available over the next 7 days and details will be sent to members.

### **3. BACKGROUND TO FORMATION OF LOCAL ECONOMIC FORUMS (see SLEF2)**

David Finch provided background information on the formation of Local Economic Forums. He explained that the role of LEFs is to agree a locally shared vision and programme of action to streamline and improve service delivery. Adding value to local economic development activity is seen as essential. The first task of the forum is to remove duplication of business support services and enhance overall service delivery. Thereafter the forum will tackle skills and labour market issues.

The forum has a planned life span of two years, and must devise and implement an action plan, which will be monitored in line with Scottish Executive guidelines.

At a local level the appointment of an LEF has the potential to:

- Provide, for the first time, a comprehensive mapping of local economic services. This could be used to streamline the delivery mechanism and bring greater benefits to local economy
- provide the opportunity for a greater alignment of the provision of skills development based on business needs
- Allow equality of opportunity to be built into local economic development at a strategic level, thus helping to promote a higher level of participation in the employment market through accessibility to business services and skills training throughout Shetland.

#### **4. MAPPING OF BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES IN SHETLAND (see SLEF3)**

The Chairman introduced Robin Lingard who had been commissioned by SEC to prepare a draft document that mapped the Business Support Services currently available in Shetland. This would take into account comments made at this meeting with the intention that a final version should be agreed at the next meeting.

Mr Lingard explained that he had presented the support services available using a matrix that assumed that all SMEs may require support and assistance, at one point or another in their development, in the form of:

- Information
- Advice and Guidance
- Training
- Access to Finance
- Access to Markets
- Access to Research and Technology
- Suitable Premises

Mr Lingard highlighted the following points:

- Economic development provision should be demand led not supply led.
- Business Counselling has been shown to be extremely useful in helping SMEs track down the form of assistance best suited to their needs.
- Funding bodies should align their requirements for information so that cases do not have to be argued in different terms for each element of the application.
- Surveys may need to be commissioned to obtain clients' views of local economic development support.

Members were asked to send any comments/amendments to Ann Black in order that a final version of the mapping document can be agreed at the next meeting.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS**

The Chairman stressed that the next step was to invite views of the forum members, especially those representing business interests, on the information that had been presented at

this meeting. It was agreed that comments on the delivery of Business Support Services in Shetland should be directed, in the first instance, to Ann Black at Shetland Enterprise. These would help complete the mapping exercise and shape the action plan of the LEF.

Sandy Cluness referred to changes being made by SIC in the way in which it gave help to local businesses. These would be very relevant to the work of the forum and should be included in the action plan.

Ruth Henderson suggested that it was always quite helpful for people in positions like hers to be up to date on all aspects of support available, which then could be passed on to members.

It was recognised that, at some stage, it would be important to get views from clients on the services that were provided, although it was felt that questionnaires would be unlikely to elicit a high rate of response. In the meantime, SEC would make available to the forum the Shetland results from the recent HIE communications survey.

## **6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was proposed to hold the next meeting on Thursday 30th August (at 14.15), with a further meeting to be held on and a follow-up meeting on Monday 24th September 2001 (at 14.15). In addition to agreeing on the final version of the business support services mapping document, a possible topic for discussion at these meetings could be 'entrepreneurship': how this is encouraged and what support is given to help those wishing to start-up businesses.