

Minutes of the ninth Local Economic Forum meeting held on Wednesday 12 June 2002 in the Bressay Room, Lerwick Hotel, Lerwick, Shetland.

Members Present:

David Finch (Chief Executive, Shetland Enterprise Company)
Gordon Dargie (Principal, Shetland College)
Alec Miller (Co-ordinator, Shetland Community Enterprise Network)
David Sandison (General Manager, Shetland Salmon Farmers' Association)
Jimmy Smith (Chair, Federation of Small Businesses)

By Invitation:

Alvin Bashforth (SIC Development Department)
Douglas Irvine (SIC Development Department)
Maggie Gemmill (Manager, Jobcentre Plus)
Robin Lingard (Kinnairdie Consulting)
Hazel Sutherland (Chief Executive's Office, SIC)

Ann Black, Shetland Enterprise Company (Secretary)

1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Maggie Gemmill was welcomed to her first meeting.

David Finch said that Brian Anderson had now retired from the Board of Shetland Enterprise Company and had indicated that he also wished to retire from his position as Chair of the Local Economic Forum. It was agreed that the position of Chair should be discussed at the next meeting.

Apologies had been received from Brian Isbister, Ruth Henderson, Jacqui Watt, Rob Anderson, Sandy Cluness, Robert Smith, Kay Smith, Gordon Johnson, Gussie Angus and Andy Carter.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING OF 20 MAY, 2002

The minutes of this meeting were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Skills to Industry Programme - Three enquiries had been received.

Shetland Portal and Fibre Optic Cable - SIC, SE and others, working in partnership, have placed a contract for a design study for the Shetland portal with a local company. Work on laying the Fibre Optic cable will be delayed by one year due to difficulties in securing private sector commitments to use the facility.

Childcare - The report The Viability and Sustainability of out of School Clubs in Shetland has been referred to the Community Planning Board. A report on the same issue has also been prepared by SIC's Education Services Committee.

Area Economic Strategy - A good response had been received from consultees to the draft 10 year Economic Development Strategy. The following structure for the strategy was emerging:

skills, marketing of Shetland and its products, diversification, transport links and strengthening the remoter communities.

4. VISIT FROM ELL COMMITTEE: 17/18 JUNE 2002

It was noted that the written submission had been presented to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee. The Committee Clerks had asked that no more than three representatives should give evidence at the meeting. Accordingly, it was agreed that the LEF's representatives should be: David Finch (Acting Chair), Jimmy Smith, (Chair of FSB) and Councillor Sandy Cluness (Chair, SIC's Development Committee), whilst noting that David Sandison and Gordon Dargie were also prepared to give evidence.

5. UPDATE ON YEAR ONE ACTION PLAN

Discussion followed on how the activities of the LEF had made a difference. Examples cited included the Business and Community Services Guide, and the equivalent being developed for training. Also the joint focus on economic development and linking it with training, as well as working towards removing the perception there may be of duplication and overlap between the activities of agencies involved in economic development. It was agreed that the change that had the greatest potential for improvement lay in a single door approach for those seeking assistance.

Members were up-dated on the progress on a common application form across agencies. Currently a Product and Process review is being undertaken by HIE with the aim to streamlining the number of products on offer to clients and simplify the information required of them. A fast tracking system for applications below £25,000 is also being developed, with a target turnaround time of 7 days, instead of the current 7 weeks. Once both these changes have been implemented within SEC, then a common application form could be discussed with SIC's Development Department.

The forum also explored its relationship with the tourism sector. It was agreed that training and marketing were areas where the activities of the LEF and the tourism sector could be linked.

6. YEAR TWO THEME(s)

Details of the SLEF year two themes were discussed and agreed. Attention was also drawn to the Year two themes of the other Forums in the Highlands and Islands. (SLEF/30).

In summary, the Forum agreed that the following should be the components of the Action Plan:

- (a) a conventional sectoral and general survey to establish the match between skills needed, skills available and the capacity of the learning infrastructure to undertake the necessary upgrading and addition to those skills;
- (b) determining the size, value, capability, markets and development potential of the learning industry in Shetland as an economic sector in its own right
- (c) short term initiatives to improve the working of the learning infrastructure, including pilot approaches to putting the individual learning at the centre of planning and delivery.

It was agreed that SEC, in consultation with partners, should prepare a more detailed Action Plan, with target dates.

7. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to hold the next meeting during September, with the date to be fixed by correspondence.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.