

## **Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament**

### **Industrial Communities**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

### **Approved Minutes of Meeting**

#### **Agenda Item 1**

#### **Attendance and Apologies:**

##### **Present:**

Colin Beattie MSP	Convener
John Mason MSP	
Adam Ingram MSP	
Cllr William Menzies	East Ayrshire Council
Cllr Bob Young	Fife Council
Cllr Tom Adams	Fife Council
Ian McCrory	Fife Council
Cllr Derek Rosie	Midlothian Council
Linda Aird	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Anne Galbraith	South Ayrshire Council
Cllr Bill Grant	South Ayrshire Council
Ian Smith	Coalfield Communities Federation
Steve Fothergill	Industrial Communities Alliance
Anne Houston	Industrial Communities Alliance
David Hewet	Industrial Communities Alliance

##### **In Attendance:**

Fergus Ewing MSP	Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism
Kevin McGowan	Scottish Government
Sandy McFadyean	Scottish Government

##### **Apologies:**

Pauline Douglas	Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Malcolm Leitch	Glasgow City Council
Cllr Catherine Johnstone	Midlothian Council
John Beveridge	Midlothian Council
Bobby McGill	National Union of Mineworkers
Cllr Heather McVey	North Lanarkshire Council

**Introductory Remarks:** The Convener welcomed all present to the Meeting. He proposed that the Cross-Party Group received the Presentations, Item 4 and Item 5 on the Agenda, prior to conducting the rest of the business.

Agreed

#### **Agenda item 4      Presentation – Fergus Ewing MSP - Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism**

The Minister firstly outlined some of the forms of assistance from the Scottish Government to support businesses and outlined recent practical examples including:

- Ferguson Shipbuilders,
- Opencast Mining following the collapse of Scottish Coal and ATH,
- Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE),
- The proposals outlined in the Plan “Reindustrialising Scotland for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Sustainable Industrial Strategy for a Modern Independent Nation”, and
- Supported Businesses in Scotland

During the question and answer session that followed the members of the Cross-Party Group sought clarification on some of the points made by the Minister or highlighted a number of issues relating to the circumstances of the older industrial areas including:

(i) Clarification as whether the Scottish Governments position regarding the reservation of contracts for Supported Businesses was advisory or compulsory.

The Minister indicated that this was not prescriptive but that the Scottish Government was suggesting that it was appropriate for this to be done.

(ii) Concern was expressed regarding the negative impact that Renewables such as Wind Farms can have on tourism in some instances.

The Minister recognised the concerns expressed. He commented that initial decisions on all proposals were made by Local Authorities but that for larger scale proposals the final decision rested with the Scottish Government. He commented that in two thirds of cases the Scottish Government had agreed with the decision of the Local Authority. He also commented that if Local Authorities objected to proposals then they must be subject to a Public Enquiry.

He finally advised that over 11,000 people in Scotland now worked in Renewable Industries.

(iii) Reference was made to a recent Planning Seminar at which it had been suggested that the incentives offered by Renewable Companies were dividing Communities.

The Minister understood the issue. He also commented that he would like to see a greater degree of community ownership of appropriate renewable schemes and indicated that there were financial incentives available for this to be realised.

(iv) It was suggested that, in relation to the future provision of energy, the focus should not purely be on renewables but that the contribution from other existing facilities such as at Hunterston should be recognised.

(v) The Minister was asked for the Scottish Governments current views on fracking.

The Minister indicated that no mainland applications were being considered at present. He suggested however that the Scottish Government disagrees with the approach taken by the U.K. Government regarding the issuing of blanket approvals and also with U.K. Government's proposal to remove the householder's Right of Objection to proposals. He highlighted that the Scottish Government has already tightened up Planning Legislation and is in the process of establishing the nature of any need for fracking to be undertaken in Scotland.

(vi) Concern was expressed regarding future Energy Policy and reference was made to the degree to which existing facilities such as at Longannet Power Station might help meet the anticipated energy gap.

It was suggested that there should be a good mix of options to ensure that no shortfalls existed.

(viii) It was suggested by the members that industrial companies in Scotland might support energy production perhaps linked to the restoration of opencast sites. Opportunities whereby Energy Policy might support the regeneration of industrial communities would be welcomed.

The Minister recognised the need for a mix of electricity and heat sources. He recognised that there was a need to be realistic and to accept that coal and other energy resources will still have a role to play in the longer term.

The Convener then took the opportunity, on behalf of all the members, to thank the Minister for addressing the Cross Party Group.

The Minister then left the meeting.

**Agenda item 5                      Presentation on the People and Communities Fund – Kevin McGowan, Regeneration Strategy Team Leader and Sandy McFadyean, Regeneration Policy Officer.**

Kevin McGowan referred to the Regeneration Strategy, launched in 2011, which focusses on disadvantaged communities and on community led regeneration.

He outlined the actions taken to ensure that community participation was meaningful such as through representation on Community Planning Partnerships.

He then referred in more detail to the People and Communities Fund and to each of the four different Programmes of Funding namely The Main Grant Element, The Strengthening Communities Programme, The Development Trusts Association

Scotland Community Ownership Support Service and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust which is the key agency supporting the social and economic regeneration of former coalfield communities.

A range of issues were highlighted by the Members during the question and answer session that followed including:

(i) Clarification was sought regarding the range of activities that might be supported in community owned facilities.

In response Kevin, as an example, outlined the range of services provided at a community owned facility in Glenboig.

(ii) Reference was made to some of the issues that were currently faced by Community Groups in terms of capacity and support.

The issues were acknowledged by Kevin, but he was of the view that the wide range of support available could assist most Groups.

(iii) Concern was expressed that the various actions being undertaken to increase community ownership of assets coupled with the establishment of Leisure Trusts by Local Authorities was significantly increasing the number of organisations eligible to seek support from a limited number of funding sources and that it was likely that many of these organisations might not receive the level of funding they required.

Kevin responded by indicating that he fully acknowledged the issue and recognised that the support provided by his section in terms of capacity building might have to identify innovative approaches to help some community owned assets to realise sustainability.

The Convener, on behalf of the members, thanked Kevin and Sandy for their presentation and asked whether information could be circulated to the Members regarding the various forms of support that might be given through the People and Communities Fund.

Kevin agreed to send information and hyperlinks to Anne Houston and also confirmed that he would be pleased to discuss any specific issues or opportunities with individual members of the Cross Party Group.

Kevin and Sandy then left the meeting.

The Convener then asked the members to return to the Agenda as circulated.

Agreed

## **Agenda Item 2      Note of Cross-Party Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2014**

The Minutes were approved.

Linda Aird took the opportunity to remind the members that a Review of the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund was expected and suggested that it be an Agenda Item for a future meeting with the Deputy First Minister.

After a short discussion it was agreed that this issue should continue to feature on Cross-Party Group meeting agendas.

## **Agenda Item 3      Note of Meeting with Nicola Sturgeon MSP on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2014 and response from the DFM to the ICA Ten Point Plan.**

The Convener invited Steve Fothergill to comment on the response from the DFM.

Steve Fothergill indicated that in his view the response was very thorough. It implied that the Ten Point Plan had been taken seriously by the Minister and the ICA was therefore very grateful for the response.

He suggested that the response did tend to focus on what the Scottish Government is currently doing, and identified some possible shortfalls in the response, including:

- (a) The response tends to comment on the position in Scotland as a whole and does not refer specifically to those issues relating to Industrial Communities.
- (b) It glosses over some points in the Ten Point Plan, such as the call for targeting of funds to areas of need, and
- (c) It fails to comment on some issues identified in the Ten Point Plan that suggest that the Westminster Government should take certain actions, such as Tax Incentives, to make Enterprise Zones work better.

After discussion it was agreed:

- (a) That the ICA Scotland should give detailed consideration to the response from the DFM and also to the points made by Professor Fothergill and that thereafter a summary of the various points should be prepared and circulated with a view to the issues being given further consideration at the next meeting of the Cross Party Group.
- (b) To remit to Anne Houston to send a letter of thanks to Nicola Sturgeon for the comprehensive response that had been received.

### **Any Other Business:**

- (a) On the invitation of the Convener Steve Fothergill updated the members regarding the post of Director Scotland for the Industrial Communities Alliance. He reported that after many years of excellent service Anne Houston had intimated that,

due to other commitments, she would be resigning from the post of Director Scotland in December, 2014. He confirmed that David Hewet has been appointed the new Director Scotland and that both he and Anne would work together during a handover period.

The Convener and members of the Cross Party Group then took the opportunity to record their sincere thanks to Anne for her support as Secretary to the Cross Party Group and wished her every success in the future.

The Convener also welcomed David Hewet to the role of Secretary to the Cross-Party Group.

(b) Future Agenda items: After discussion it was agreed:

(i) The Agenda for the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group should include (i) An invitation to representatives of the Big Lottery Fund to give a presentation on its work, and (ii) The Findings of recent research on lottery funding undertaken by the ICA Secretariat.

(ii) To invite the members of the ICA Scotland to give consideration to the topics they may wish to have discussed at meetings of the Cross-Party Group in 2015.

**Agenda item 6      Date of Next Meeting:** It was agreed that the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group should be held on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

DAH