



**Minutes of Meeting**

**Sutherland Spaceport Community Liaison Group (CLG) Meeting  
Annual Public Meeting**

07 March 2024

19.00

Kyle Centre, Tongue

<b>ATTENDEES</b>			
<b>Present</b>		<b>Online</b>	
Frances Gunn	(Interim Chair) UpNorth Development Trust	Hugh Morrison	Highland Council
Lesley Still	Orbex	Frazer Brown	Dynamic Concepts
Kirsteen Mackay	Orbex	Steve Johnstone	Dynamic concepts
Laura Cameron	Orbex	Peter Guthrie	Highland & Islands Enterprise
Caleb Montgomery	Orbex	Ben Oliver Jones	RSPB
Martin Reid	Tongue Community Council		
Barry Allsop	Tongue Grazings Committee		
Stuart Mingham	Member of the public		
Peter Faccenda	Highland & Islands Enterprise		
Eann Sinclair	Highland & Islands Enterprise		
Dorothy Pritchard	Melness Crofters Estate		
Maggie Bochel	Aroua Planning		
Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce		

<b>No</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and opening remarks from the Interim Chair</b>		
	Frances welcomed everyone. Introductions were made from those present and those online.		
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>		
	Apologies were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Mosely, Bea Ayling, Allan Mackay, Mark Findlay.</li> </ul>		



3.	<b>Conflict of Interest</b>		
	There were no conflicts of interest raised.		
4.	<b>Items Arising from Previous Minutes/Notes</b>		
	Minutes of last meeting were approved		
5.	<b>Orbex Updates</b>		
5.1	<p><b>Construction</b></p> <p>Fraser Brown and Steve Johnstone from Dynamic Concepts (DC), updated on the current progress of the floating road being build out to the launch pad. DC are very pleased with the progress that has been made to date, considering they have been dealing with quite severe weather conditions. The car park at the entrance is mostly complete, the large spoil heaps have been removed and the ground landscaped. There will be peat restoration done on these areas and this will be monitored by the Environmental Clerk of Works present during construction. The 2nd phase of the road construction out to the water crossings is well under way. The bridges for these water crossings were delivered to site last month, and their journey to the site can be viewed on the Orbex website or on the attached power point slides under construction update.</p> <p>Instead of running large vehicles over the road, a helicopter will be used to bring in and pour the concrete needed to secure the bridges. It is hoped that this will happen towards the end of March.</p> <p>The SSE substation on the site is in place and will be ready to be energised by the 14/03/2024.</p> <p>Construction is on target to meet the proposed timeframe for completion.</p>		
5.2	<p><b>PoAN, Public Consultations and Planning Application</b></p> <p>Maggie Bochel from Aroura Planning discussed the process from submission of the proposal of Application Notice to Highland Council, public consultations, and the final planning application which covers a small reduction in size of the main Spaceport and the relocation of communications equipment to the Summit of Ben Tongue.</p> <p>The communications equipment will be located beside the existing communications mast. The planning application will be submitted at the end of March and will be viewable on The Highland Council planning portal. Stakeholders and those with interests in the ground, included in the planning application, will be notified individually by letter.</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PoAN was submitted to the Highland council on the 02 November 2023.</li> <li>• Two public consultation days took place in Tongue on the 05 December 2023 and the 08 February 2024. Information gathered and feedback from these sessions can be viewed at:</li> </ul>		



	<p><a href="https://orbex.space/spaceport/changes-to-the-spaceport-scheme">https://orbex.space/spaceport/changes-to-the-spaceport-scheme</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be a 21-day period after submission where notifications to the council can be made.</li> <li>• The full planning application is due to be submitted towards the end of March 2024.</li> </ul> <p>Maggie reported that the response from the public consultations was positive and supportive of the Spaceport.</p>		
5.3	<p><b>STEM Update</b></p> <p>Lesley emphasised the ongoing commitment that the Spaceport and Orbex have towards becoming involved with schools and building the young workforce, through establishing good links with schools and the University of the Highlands and Islands. This will be ongoing.</p>		
5.4	<p><b>International Bilateral Fund (IBF)</b></p> <p>Lesley reported that the International Bilateral Fund application discussed at the last meeting was not successful. But strong relations have been made with Virginia and Orbex will continue to build on this.</p>		
5.5	<p><b>Journey to Launch Film Series</b></p> <p>Finding our Way is the second film in the series documenting the Orbex journey. This short film can be viewed on YouTube, or via the Orbex website.</p>		
5.6	<p><b>Birth of a Spaceport</b></p> <p>Is the first in a series of short films documenting the journey of the Spaceport and can be viewed on YouTube, or via the Orbex website.</p>		
5.7	<p><b>New Security Manager</b></p> <p>Orbex's new Security Manager, Laura Cameron, introduced herself to the group. Laura has worked in the security sector for the MOD and then in the Cabinet Office and was involved in personnel and physical security.</p> <p>Laura described her security role as encompassing not only the safety of the Orbex Prime rocket, but also protecting the local and visiting population, the landscape, and environment in Sutherland. She looks forward to working with the community.</p> <p>Her security role also covers the Orbex sites in Copenhagen and in Forres.</p>		
5.8	<p><b>Visitor Management Plan (VMP)</b></p> <p>Lesley reported, the aims of the VMP remain the same and the draft is currently in development with the wider Orbex team to agree content.</p>		



	A draft plan will be shared with key groups/organisations including the Community Liaison Group. We expect these meetings to begin in the coming months. As soon as we can, we will begin to share the draft document details and will welcome feedback.		
5.9	<p><b>Weather Balloons</b></p> <p>A series of weather balloon releases are taking place near to the Spaceport site to gather critical data on local atmospheric conditions. The balloons are made of latex and filled with small volumes of helium, to ensure no fuel emissions.</p> <p>The first balloon launches took place in February. It is thought that there will eventually be one launch a day. More information will be provided once this process starts. The required licences for this activity have been obtained from the regulatory Authority (CAA) and Ofcom.</p>		
6.	<b>Proposal for New Group Member</b>		
	All agreed that a representative from the local hospitality sector would be beneficial to have on the group.		
7.	<b>Appointment of a New Chair</b>		
	This agenda item was carried over to the next meeting.		
8.	<b>Questions /Comments Raised</b>		
8.1	<p>Peter asked, how much information and notice will the public and hospitality get for the first launch?</p> <p>This is something to which there is not a definitive answer at present, currently Orbex are working to an internal timeline. Once we know a date there will be lots of communication with the relevant groups and stakeholders. And the date for first launch will be shared as soon as we are able.</p>		
8.2	<p>Trudy suggested packages for activities available within the area be developed within the hospitality sector, giving visitors activities to do while waiting for the launch, or if a launch is cancelled.</p> <p>On engaging young people, Trudy mentioned that there are activity co-ordinators in all the schools who would be good contacts to have for engagement with the schools and STEM.</p>		
8.3	It was suggested that the NC500 website should be involved in posting information for the busy summer months, advising visitors of the increase in construction road traffic in the area.	KM to find out if this is something the NC500 website would include	
8.4	<p>Concerns were raised around reports of construction vehicles speeding on the surrounding roads and through the village.</p> <p>Fraser reported that all Orbex related construction traffic is instructed of the speed limits and the restrictions in the area.</p> <p>On top of this DC will now be taking photographic evidence of vehicles as they leave the weigh bridge and the time logged,</p>		



	<p>and all drivers will be reminded to stick to the speed limits and be courteous.</p> <p>While we will endeavour to ensure lorries delivering to the Spaceport drive as instructed, within the area there are many construction vehicles passing through that are not related to the Spaceport, and Orbex has no control over these vehicles.</p> <p>If anyone wishes to contact Orbex with concerns around construction traffic please email <a href="mailto:Kirsteen.mackay@orbex.space">Kirsteen.mackay@orbex.space</a> or <a href="mailto:sutherlandspaceport@orbex.space">sutherlandspaceport@orbex.space</a></p>		
8.5	<p>Dorothy asked when the peatland restoration will take place.</p> <p>Caleb reported that the main peatland restoration areas will not be started until after the construction phase is finished.</p>		
8.6	<p>Peter thanked the Orbex staff for their attendance at the Focus North Business Day in Thurso and advised the group of the upcoming Focus North Conference in Wick on the 19 March 2024.</p>		
8.7	<p>There will be an attachment with these notes containing slides with information on some of the discussion points in this meeting. Including the videos of the Journey to Launch Short film and the arrival of the water crossing bridges to the spaceport site.</p>		
8.8	<p>For the community to be aware of what is happening around the Spaceport please share the issues talked about and discussed at the CLG with your respective groups.</p>	<p>All - share the issues talked about and discussed at the CLG with your respective groups</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Date of Next meeting</b>		
	<p>Date of next meeting has been set for Thursday 24 October 2024</p>	<p>KM - Schedule next meeting.</p>	