

Sutherland Partnership Board of Management

Minute of meeting held at 1400 on Monday 24 August 2009, in Lairg.

1. Meeting attendance / Introduction and Apologies.

Directors.

Ann Keatinge (VGES) (in the chair)
Ian Ross (HC Councillor)
Jim McGillivray (HC Councillor)

Others present.

William Sutherland (SP Manager)(Secretary)
Phil Tomalin (HC)
Andy Mackay (HC)
Anne Sutherland (HIE)
Lesley Cranna (SNH)
Frances Gunn (CVS North)
Christian Goskirk (NHS Highland)
Mary Macleod (NFS/WfF)
Graham Jones (SP Treasurer)
Graham Macleod (Scottish Ambulance)
Linda Kennedy (Scottish Ambulance)
Alan Knox (Scottish Ambulance)
(Scottish Ambulance delegates for Ambulance Consultation item only.)

2. Introduction and Apologies. Sutherland Partnership Director Ann Keatinge took the chair, in the unavoidable absence of SP Chairman Robbie Rowantree, and the absence of Vice Chairman Alex Murray owing to illness. Ann welcomed delegates, and all those present endorsed her good wishes to Alex Murray and a speedy improvement in his health. Apologies were received from: Robbie Rowantree, Alex Murray, Georgia Haire, Tim Cockerill, Deirdre Mackay, Ian Hargrave, George Farlow, Fiona Mackenzie, Russell Rekhy and Ronnie Lansley.

(Taken next as Scottish Ambulance representatives unavoidably delayed.) **Minute of the Board Meeting of 18 May 2009.** Proposed by Lesley Cranna, seconded by Ian Ross, and accepted.

3. Matters Arising.

a. Ambulances and Patient Transport. Briefing fixed for today.

b. SP Future Short Life Working Group. This had not been convened, owing to difficulties in programming such a meeting when so many people are away or unavailable. Postponed until after the Sutherland Summit in September.

4. AGM Report. William Sutherland gave a short summary of the SP AGM, which had taken place on 1 July. The financial statements had been approved, and accountant Ian Mackay, of Mackay and Co., Golspie, had been reappointed as SP examining accountant. At the AGM, one-third (four) of Directors had resigned, as demanded by the SP Memorandum and Articles, and had been re-elected. William reported that a new Chairman and Vice-chairman had not been identified, despite vigorous canvassing by the SP Manager, so Robbie Rowantree and Alex Murray had kindly agreed to continue for one more year. William requested Board members to consider whether they themselves could assume one of these two roles next year. The AGM presentation by Northern Constabulary Chief Inspector Andy Brown had been particularly interesting and well-received. Numbers of those attending had been rather low, however, and next year it would be preferable if the AGM could be held in late June, rather than after the onset of the holiday season in July.

Action: William Sutherland

5. NFS/WfF Report. Mary Macleod talked to her report, which was distributed in hard copy. Client numbers and outputs are holding up very well, and indeed some client weeding is now taking place, to ensure value for money. New NFS project workers have been recruited and trained, and are now in operation. NFS has been in frequent contact with our Big Lottery Fund case officer,

and has been answering his frequent questions on NFS progress, to his satisfaction we hope. The future continuation of Working for Families has clarified only slightly, with yet another short funding extension until March 2010. This does make forward planning difficult, and Ann Keatinge expressed the hope that the WfF long-term future can be settled soon.

6. Scottish Ambulance Service Consultation. Three speakers from the Scottish Ambulance Service – Graham Macleod (Head of Accident and Emergency Ambulances), Linda Kennedy (Head of Patient Transport) and Alan Knox (SAS Strategy Consultation North Division Team Member) gave presentations to the Board on recent developments in Sutherland provision, and on the current consultation. Board member introductions were made.

The SAS team members talked about both the local situation here in Sutherland, and about the bigger picture covered by the current strategy consultation. On the local position, Graham Macleod updated on the uplift in local ambulance staff numbers which had been made possible by funding increases. In Lairg, for example, staff numbers had increased to four (despite staff recruitment and retention difficulties) and the aim was to reach five. Staff numbers are also increasing in Golspie, Kinlochbervie and Bettyhill, and Lochinver numbers are stable. Standards have to be maintained, so some recruits fail the training course, which makes for some difficulties. Graham also briefed on other recent local developments: the advent of “first responders” at Rosehall (with others planned locally) and discussions with Northern Constabulary for possible use of police premises for ambulance staff. The CPR role of the “first responders” was described, and this triggered extended discussion. SAS are currently actively recruiting these. The team stressed that first responders, whilst very valuable to give early help with resuscitation, are not ambulancemen, being trained in a much narrower range of skills. Nonetheless, SP Board members from across Sutherland expressed interest in the first responder scheme being extended to their areas. Alan Knox gave an interesting presentation on the current SAS Strategy Consultation.

Key points:

- Consultation now extended to end of September. SP consultation input solicited.
- One size does not fit all, in ambulance provision. Local conditions are important, and remote areas need particular attention.
- More emphasis being placed on treatment local to the patient, rather than defaulting to hospital visits.
- Increased emphasis on partnership working, on improved NHS/SAS cooperation, on first responders, and on improved triage (immediate casualty assessment) skills and training.

There was Board surprise at the SAS statistic that in 80% of cases there is “no clinical need” for patient transport from SAS. Members pointed out the difficulties inherent in, say, driving from Durness to Inverness for a patient appointment: a round trip distance of around 200 miles. Linda Kennedy briefed on the current challenges facing the patient transport service. These include the advent of new mileage rates for volunteer drivers. Whilst the rate has risen to £0.40 per mile, this is limited to just 10,000 miles per annum per driver, with the rate then dropping to just £0.25 per mile. This is a particular problem in remote areas, where drivers can quickly reach this threshold and are, in some cases, now declining to accept further work at the lower rate. This issue is still being addressed.

Meeting chair Ann Keatinge thanked the three SAS speakers for their interesting talks, and all three then departed.

7. LEADER in Sutherland – Update. Frances Gunn, joint chair of the Sutherland LEADER Local Area Partnership (LAP), briefed on the LAP’s most recent meeting in June, its second, which she had recently chaired. Four projects had been considered, and all four, following varying amounts of discussion, had been approved. Notable among these had been the SNH bid for a Knockan Crag upgrade, which had been approved subject to inclusion of improved signposting to north Sutherland. With the inclusion of the SP Environmental Fund application (which, owing to SP conflict of interest, had been approved by the Inverness LEADER LAG) the total sum allocated had

risen to £314.5K, leaving £710.5K of the Sutherland £1.025M still to be allocated. It is clear that, after a slow start, LEADER is now “taking off” in Sutherland.

8. Sutherland Summit – Update. Frances Gunn briefed on this item also. Preparations were now progressing quickly. Involvement of two Scottish Government ministers – Jim Mather and Rosanna Cunningham – had been confirmed. Key conference roles had been allocated. The delegate list had filled up rapidly - there had been high levels of interest and demand and around 184 delegates were now envisaged, compared with original plans for around 150.

9. Sutherland Partnership from 2009 - Update. William Sutherland explained that, despite the stated intention at the previous Board, it had not proved possible to convene a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) in July as planned. This had been due to annual leave being taken, and a number of conflicting commitments on the part of those who were not on holiday. William regretted that the SLWG had not yet met, but it had become clear that an SLWG meeting soon before the Sutherland Summit would be difficult to convene and might be of lesser value. A meeting after the Summit and its follow-up workshops would be bound to be more useful. This was now the aim. It was hoped that clear direction from the Summit and its follow-up activities would provide the foundation for a Sutherland plan. This plan should be more practicable and achievable than the current plan, and less aspirational, and it would have to take full account of the current economic situation.

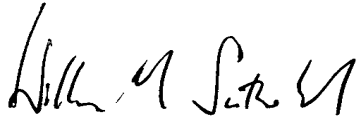
10. Geopark Officer’s report. In the absence of Officer Fiona Mackenzie, William Sutherland briefly talked to her report. He mentioned the recent activities in which the Geopark had recently been involved: its marketing initiatives, its participation in the European Geoparks Network (EGN) fortnight, and its links with the International Appalachian Trail. Two current key issues predominate, however: first, the question of future Geopark funding; and secondly the impending EGN revalidation exercise to permit our Geopark’s future EGN membership. On the first, there has been much progress, but the completion of the funding package will largely depend on an increase in the Geopark’s SRDP funding intervention rate. We have been in contact with the office of Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead, and with other Scottish Government officials, seeking an increase from 50% to 87% SRDP funding, in line with recently revised Scottish Government rules. Result awaited. The two EGN revalidators will visit from 3 - 5 September, and a good report (which will include consideration of our Geopark’s funding state) will be vital.

11. HIE Community Account Management. Anne Sutherland briefed on this new HIE initiative, designed to promote growth in community economic activity. It will focus, particularly, on HIE-designated “fragile areas”, which in Sutherland are likely to comprise the North and West of the county, and the Straths ending in Helmsdale in the East. Lessons learned from the “Initiative at the Edge” will serve as a bedrock for this development, which will be coherent with the Single Outcome Agreement and which will involve extensive cooperation with community planning partners and wide consultations and collaboration with communities themselves. It is planned that a local organisation – perhaps a social enterprise - will “anchor” Community Account Management activity in each area. It is also planned to appoint nine Local Development Officers across Highland to carry this work forward – and these may require either recruitment to new posts or redirection of existing manpower. They will work in cooperation with, and with help from, the HIE Community Account Management Team, who will source specialist advice and support for communities where required. HIE funding will comprise 55% of the initiative’s initial finance, with a further 45% being sought from Highland LEADER (outcome pending.) It is envisaged that HIE’s involvement will not be long-term: there will be a review point after two years, with the expectation that by then the economic activity generated will have acquired the necessary degree of sustainability – a sustainable long-term revenue stream will be fundamental. Selection of communities will be the responsibility of the local HIE team, but this will be done in particularly close consultation with communities. The aim will be for each community to have a Community Growth Plan, with targets, milestones and timelines aimed at increased community economic activity, improved community income, sustainable community action plans, healthy population increase trends, and greater cooperation and cohesion between communities.

Discussion followed. There was recognition of the great potential value of this initiative, in the light of which it was disappointing that it will not be available throughout Sutherland. Anne advised that there is a presentation on Community Account Management, which can be made available on demand.

12. AOCB. None.

13. DONM. As previously decided, the final SP Board date for 2009 is Monday 9 November. Lairg CC Kinvonvie Suite has been booked for a meeting start time of 1400. Chair Ann Keatinge expressed hopes for a good attendance on that occasion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W M Sutherland'.

W M SUTHERLAND
Sutherland Partnership Manager, Secretary, Sutherland Partnership Board