

Falkirk Economic Partnership
Falkirk Stadium Brockville Lounge
02 March 2017

Minute

Attendees

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Scottish
Government, Minister for Business,
Innovation and Energy
Cllr Craig Martin, Falkirk Council
Rhona Geisler, Falkirk Council
Ian Little, Ineos
Stuart Wallace, Forth Ports
Iain Mitchell, John Mitchell Haulage &
Warehousing
Ken Thomson – Forth Valley College
Russell Clark – Calachem
Julia Brown – Scottish Enterprise

Matthew Farrell – Falkirk Council
Douglas Duff – Falkirk Council

Apologies:
Cllr Dennis Goldie
John McNally, Ineos

1. Welcome & Introductions

Rhona Geisler introduced those attending to the meeting and in particular thanked Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy for attending the meeting. The Minister welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting. He explained that he had met Cllr Martin recently and that he had been encouraged by the prospects for growth that had been suggested may come forward in the Falkirk area. He was keen to meet with the partners involved and to understand how this work was to be taken forward, assisting where possible in its development.

2. Grangemouth Investment Zone/Grangemouth Vision Presentation

Each of the partners gave a short presentation on the work that was being undertaken to grow the economy of the Falkirk area and to progress the Investment Zone proposition.

Douglas Duff gave an update on the progress of the Falkirk Narrative paper and proposals for the development of a business case for the Investment Zone. He outlined the engagement process that had taken place so far, the key areas for activity and next steps in delivery of this work.

John Hand gave a presentation on the work of Chemicals Sciences Scotland/SE in the development of the Grangemouth Vision. He highlighted its intention that Grangemouth should become a Key European Hub for Sustainable High Value Chemical Manufacturing and the core elements of activity necessary to drive this forward. He emphasised that this work had been compiled by involving a range of industry players and that it is intended to progress this work through liaison with Scottish and UK level industry groups.

Julia Brown indicated that the area had reached a tipping point in terms of investment and that SE were keen to make the most of the opportunities presented. They were looking towards a number of potential funding streams, including those linked to the UK Industrial Strategy. SE were working at a programme level for Grangemouth to take this work forward.

Ian Little of Ineos gave a brief presentation of the company's plans for redevelopment of the Grangemouth site. He highlighted the proposals for clearance and remodelling of the site and Ineos intention for it to be the pre-eminent chemicals location in Scotland. He noted that there was considerable UK and international competition for mobile chemicals related investment and the need for excellence in the infrastructure serving the site.

Ken Thomson of Forth Valley College presented the proposals for the creation of the new £83m Falkirk campus. He highlighted that the campus would have a particular focus on STEM related subjects and that the College would be working closely with a range of industry and schools contacts to develop connections into the labour market. He also mentioned the connections that FVC has established with Universities and Innovation Centres across the Central Belt and that the College has the highest number of '2+2' students in Scotland. The need to promote other sectors, including tourism & hospitality were highlighted.

Russell Clarke gave an update on the work of Calachem and its 4 business operations at the Grangemouth site. The company employs 180 people and supports a range of chemicals businesses on the site, including those located on the regenerated Earlsgate Park site. Russell highlighted in particular the proposals to bring forward a new energy from waste plant at the site and the company's support for the delivery of the Grangemouth vision.

Stuart Wallace of Forth Ports emphasised the value of the connections that were evident in Grangemouth, which in his view were unrivalled in Scotland or the UK. Grangemouth is highly integrated with a set of supportive partnership arrangements which augured well for the economy's progress. He emphasised the opportunities to

take advantage of the partnership in relation to tackling matters such as the provision of district heating to serve the area; the potential for increased use of rail capacity and the development of the tourism sector around the cruise industry. He also highlighted the need for a focused model of delivery.

Iain Mitchell outlined the work of his company in Grangemouth and highlighted the value of Grangemouth's central location in enabling access across Scotland. He highlighted the importance of engaging the community in any future prospects for the area. The opportunity to galvanise community support around the upgrade to Zetland Park had been witnessed recently and Iain highlighted the excellence of the schools in the area. Iain mentioned the need to examine the prospects to bring forward the delivery of the A801 Avon Gorge and that this would be an important boost to the delivery of the Investment Zone.

Steve Dunlop presented on the work of Scottish Canals to regenerate the canal network across the Central Belt of Scotland, particularly in Falkirk. He emphasised the value of having a clear ambition and of engaging the local community in driving changes forward. This had been key to the delivery of projects such as the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies and had demonstrated their transformative power. He highlighted that a movement of confidence and aspiration had been created that was keen to address its next challenge.

Cllr Craig Martin welcomed the presentations and highlighted the alignment of the messages conveyed. He reinforced the scale of opportunity presented by the Investment Zone prospect and the need to focus on its delivery. The Economic Partnership was an important tool in resolving the way forward and he looked forward to seeing the results of this next stage of work.

Mr Wheelhouse indicated that the presentations had been fascinating to hear and that he welcomed the enthusiasm and demonstration that people were working together. He was happy to agree the Joint Statement of Intent that had been established and to engage further with partners, including at UK level, in how this is taken forward. Scottish Government would be contributing to the work on the UK Industrial Strategy and he saw Grangemouth as being an important component to this work. He did stress the need to be realistic about the prospects for public sector funding to assist in delivery of what is proposed. The need to focus on innovation is important and he highlighted the work that the College can contribute in this area.

Rhona Geisler noted that work on the business case would be taking place quickly to capture the intentions that had been expressed at the meeting and that the Partnership would be keen to get together again to progress the business case, present the findings and consider how it should progress.

Cllr Martin closed the meeting by thanking the Minister for attending the meeting and wished the Partnership well in progressing its work.