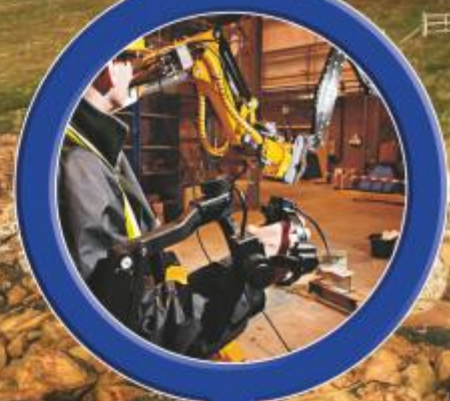


Caithness
North Sutherland

make the right connections



Vision for Caithness & North Sutherland

THE ENERGY ENVIRONMENT



SEA CLIFFS



SANDY BEACHES



FERTILE FARMLAND



RUGGED MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

Caithness and the north coast of Sutherland is a land of contrasts. Its landscape has soaring sea cliffs and long sandy beaches, low-level fertile farmland and rugged mountainous terrain.

Its businesses also work at the high end of the market: Thurso-based **ABSL Power Solutions** provide power cells for space missions, whilst Wick-based **Kongsberg Maritime's** subsea cameras help explore the deepest parts of earth's oceans. **Subsea 7** assembles the world's largest movable structures (pipelines for the oil and gas industry) from its base at Wester, whilst **KP Technology** works in the nanotechnology industry, exporting products to over 20 countries.

The area has always been a cultural crossroads. Its strategic position at the meeting point of Atlantic and North seas brought it importance from Viking times onwards, and its historical mix of Viking, Pict, Celt and Scot has bred a culture that is open to new influences. The 20th Century saw a significant influx of workers to the Dounreay nuclear power site, and it is a testament to the attractiveness of the local area that several generations of that original workforce have chosen to remain in the area to live and work.

Caithness & north Sutherland is at an economic and social crossroads once again. The decommissioning of the Dounreay site opens another chapter in the area's history, and community focus is upon the opportunities that 21st century industries offer. The population of Caithness and north Sutherland is approximately 26,000: our aspirations are to maintain that level and to increase it as new economic opportunities are realised. This vision document seeks to capture the community's aspirations, and to articulate the steps needed to achieve these aims.

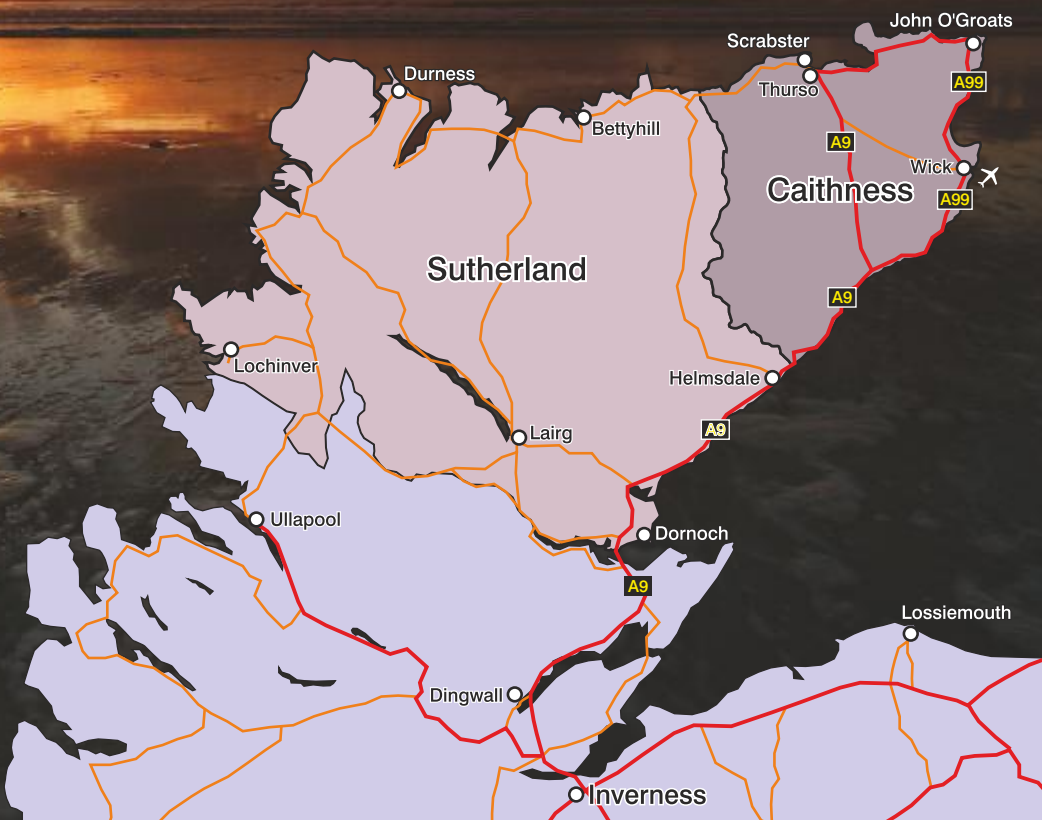


Vision:

By 2020 Caithness and north Sutherland will provide a healthy, economically stable environment for its growing population. Its network of thriving communities will reflect the rich heritage and varied landscapes. The area's population will be well-educated, highly-skilled and outward-looking, reinforcing its attractiveness as a place in which to live, work, invest and visit.

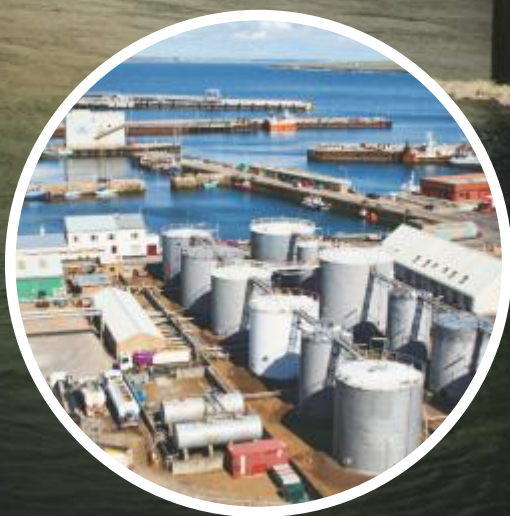
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This document has been funded by:



Vision:

By 2020 Caithness and north Sutherland will be an international centre for marine renewable energy, helping meet Scottish, UK and EU renewable energy targets. The region will offer sustainable high quality employment in research, development, fabrication and deployment of renewable energy devices; offshore and onshore, and provide a service hub for the oil and gas industry in the west of Shetland area.



Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Connecting local companies to opportunities from the wave and tidal industry in the Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters
- Connecting local companies to opportunities from offshore wind energy developments in the North Sea.
- Attracting companies focussed on off-shore wind, wave and tidal energy development and production to locate in the area
- Additional commercial opportunities in the marine energy sector including R&D, capital build programmes, infrastructure development, off-shore and near shore development and engineering requirements
- Developing a locally-based research hub for key aspects of marine energy and the environment at North Highland College / UHI
- Establishing Scrabster Harbour as a supply base for the oil and gas sector
- Attracting businesses with high energy usage requirements to the area such as those involved in chemical or pharmaceutical production and green data centres, with excellent international connectivity powered by renewable energy



ENGINEERING

Vision:

By 2020 Caithness engineering companies will have successfully diversified into the energy and manufacturing sectors, building on world class skills in the area.



Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

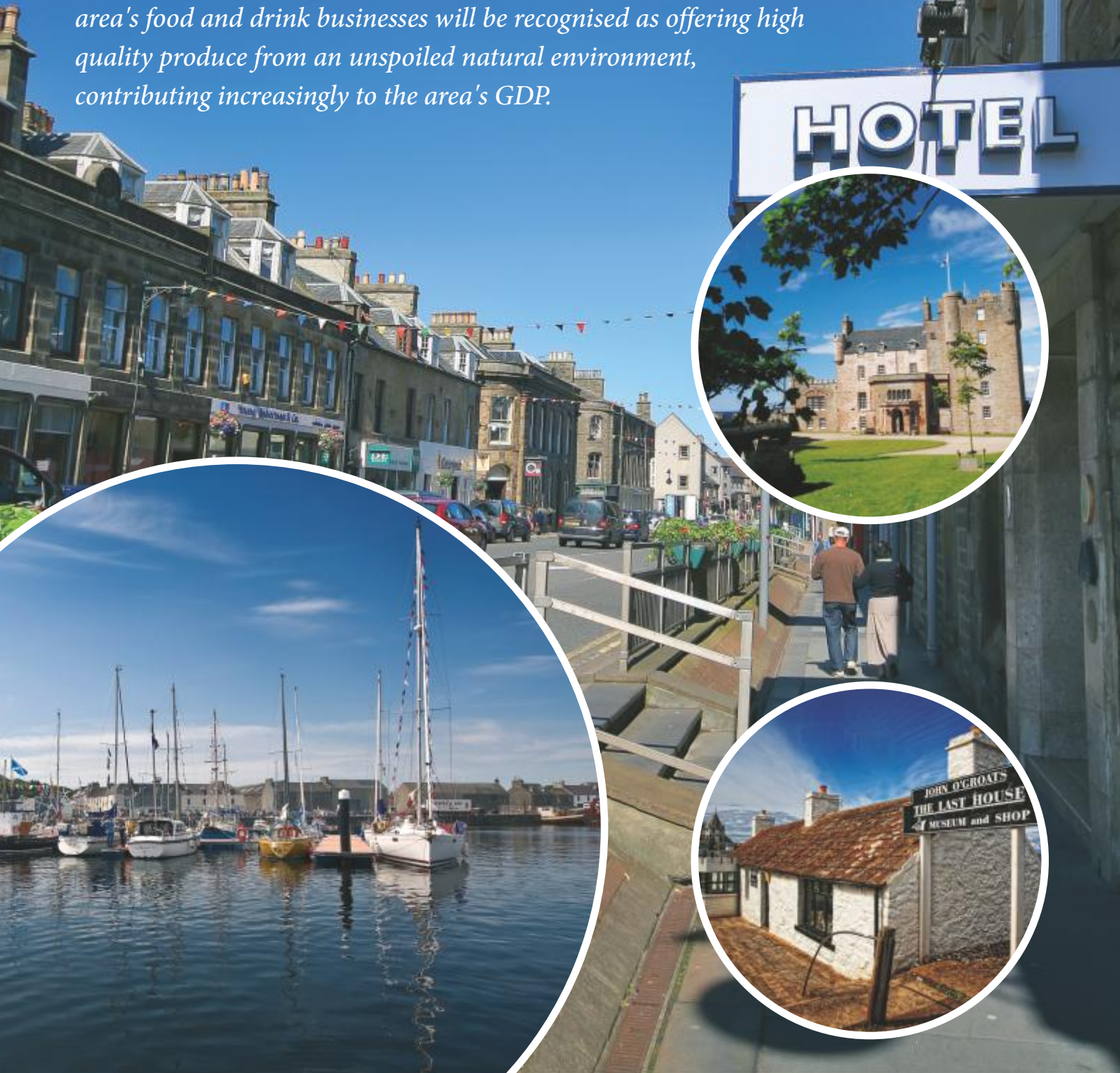
- Enhancing workforce skills through focus on science, technology, engineering and maths from primary school onwards
- Enhancing workforce skills and capabilities through the UHI Engineering Skills Centre in Thurso
- Attracting to the area engineering companies involved in research and design development
- Promoting the proven engineering and decommissioning expertise and experience of local firms and their employees
- Developing the health and safety expertise currently available in the area



TOURISM & LOCAL PRODUCE

Vision:

By 2020 Caithness and north Sutherland will be a destination of choice for visitors from the UK and abroad seeking high quality visitor experiences in a relaxed and welcoming environment. The area's food and drink businesses will be recognised as offering high quality produce from an unspoiled natural environment, contributing increasingly to the area's GDP.



Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Continuing to develop the area's tourism infrastructure (accommodation, attractions and venues)
- Redeveloping John O'Groats as a key tourism destination
- Developing high-value tourism products and markets
- Developing high-value markets for our food and drink businesses
- Developing branding and appreciation of locally-produced food



ENTERPRISE & INNOVATION

Vision:

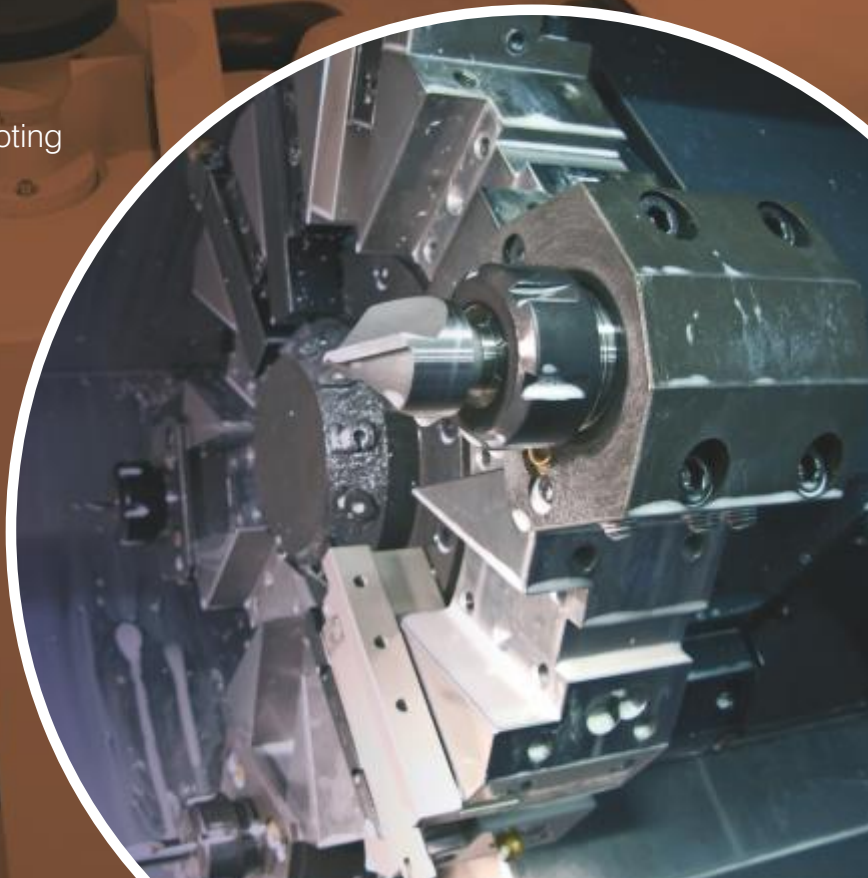
By 2020 the Caithness and north Sutherland economy will be recognised as offering a sustainable environment for industry and emerging businesses.



Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Raising awareness of the area's research facilities and skills base
- Attracting inward investors in key sectors such as business services support, data centres, etc.
- Marketing the area's reputation for innovation through research & development
- Supporting collaborative business working through Caithness Chamber of Commerce
- Providing a supportive business environment for the incubation and development of technology projects and companies
- Bring commercial opportunities by promoting the areas reputation for a low turnover of staff, great productivity and excellent customer service skills



Vision:

By 2020 the communities of Caithness and north Sutherland will have undergone economic transition whilst preserving their unique cultural and environmental heritage.



Opportunities

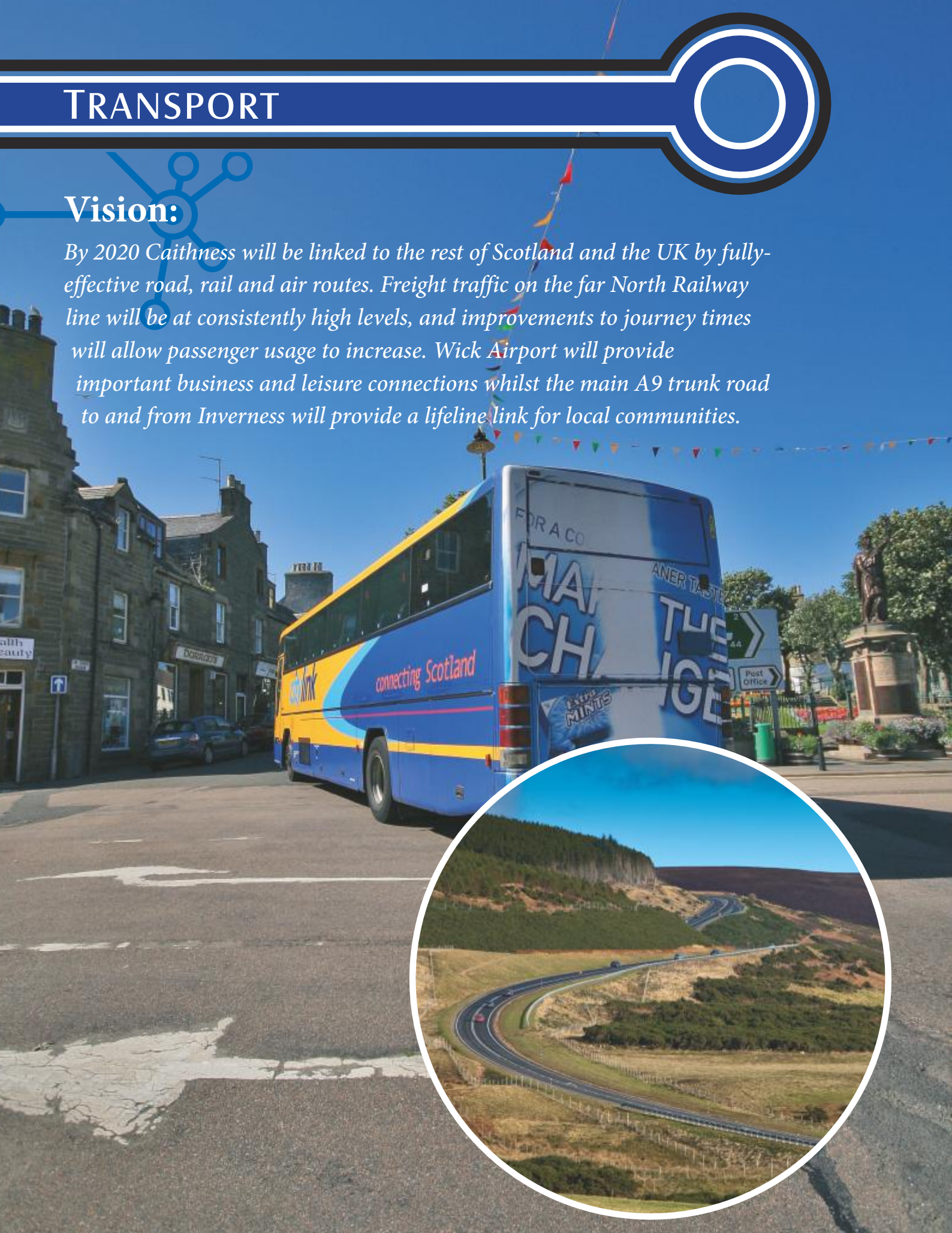
Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Enhancing local health services and developing medical research capabilities at Caithness General Hospital
- Developing attractive and thriving town centres in Wick and Thurso
- Enhancing local education infrastructure
- Strengthening local sports and arts capabilities through investment in facilities



Vision:

By 2020 Caithness will be linked to the rest of Scotland and the UK by fully-effective road, rail and air routes. Freight traffic on the far North Railway line will be at consistently high levels, and improvements to journey times will allow passenger usage to increase. Wick Airport will provide important business and leisure connections whilst the main A9 trunk road to and from Inverness will provide a lifeline link for local communities.



Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Making safety and journey time improvements to the A9 Trunk Road
- Developing freight/ road interchanges on the north railway line
- Delivering journey time improvements on the north railway line
- Delivering technical enhancements at Wick Airport to maintain and enhance national connectivity
- Delivering a high quality inter-connected public transport network



Vision:

By 2020 the area will play a full part in the digital economy, with high-speed connectivity available to business and domestic users. The area will be recognised as one where technology is at the core of social and economic development, embracing technological change and adapting it to meet rural needs.





Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Creating a “point of presence” in Caithness to enhance the area's overall telecoms connectivity
- Improving broadband capability through faster bandwidth allowing better access for business
- Creating benefit from the roll-out of 3G technology
- Attracting data centres and other ITC functions to the area
- Attracting business services to the area
- Developing home/ remote working opportunities
- Developing opportunities from the creation of a National Nuclear Archive in Wick



SKILLS

Vision:

By 2020 Caithness and north Sutherland will be recognised throughout Scotland for its highly-skilled, motivated and loyal workforce. Its schools and higher/ further learning organisations will work together to give young people the best possible opportunities to enter skilled employment. The working population will have continuously enhanced skills maintaining the area's reputation for adaptability and innovation.



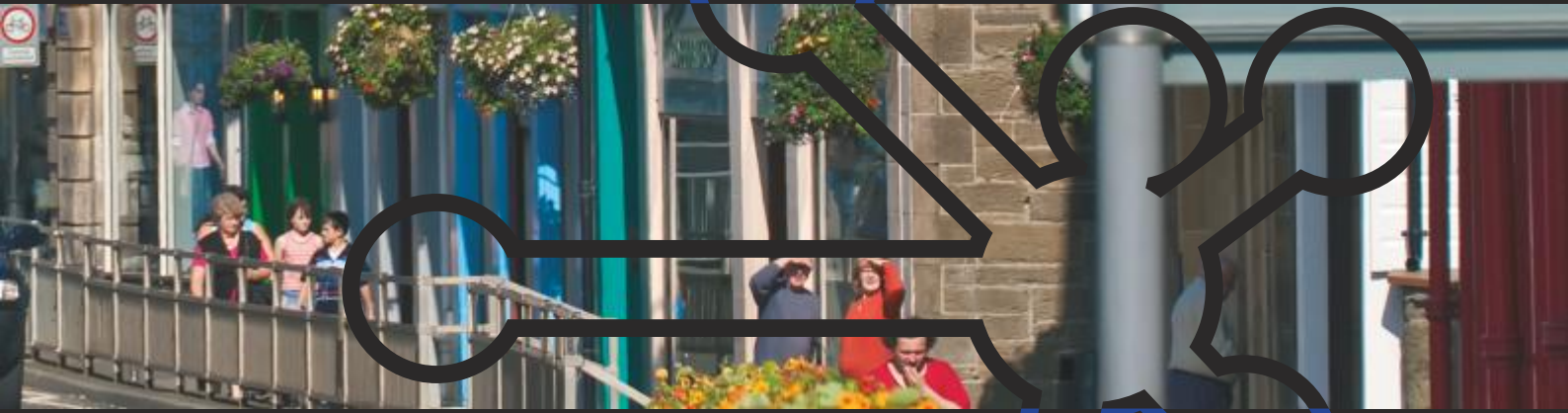
Opportunities

Creating sustainable economic growth and local employment by:

- Achieving university title for University of the Highlands & Islands and establishing key specialisms within North Highland College involving the Centre for Energy and the Environment, the Engineering Skills Centre and the Centre for History
- Further developing local skills infrastructure to improve access to learning particularly focussing on STEM teaching in schools
- Marketing the loyal and highly-skilled local labour pool to key market sectors
- Maintaining and growing the number of apprentices entering industry







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