

## SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISIT TO SHETLAND

The Scottish Affairs Committee visited Shetland on Sunday 24 – Tuesday 26 March 2024 principally in connection with its ongoing inquiry into *Scotland's space sector*, as well as its inquiry into *City and Region Growth Deals*.

Members in attendance:<sup>1</sup>

- Alan Brown MP
- Wendy Chamberlain MP
- David Duguid MP
- Christine Jardine MP
- Mark Menzies MP
- Ms Anum Qaisar MP
- Michael Shanks MP

### *SaxaVord Spaceport*

The Committee visited SaxaVord Spaceport on the island of Unst, which in December 2023 became the UK's first licensed vertical launch spaceport. The Committee was given a tour of the SaxaVord launch site, including the launch pad being built for Rocket Factory Augsburg's first launch attempt, and the nearby integration hangar.

The Committee also met with various SaxaVord representatives including Frank Strang (CEO), Scott Hammond (Deputy CEO), Derek Hamilton (Spaceport Operations Manager), Elizabeth Johnson (External Relations Manager) and Ramsay Jones (Consultant). Scott Hammond had previously provided oral evidence to the Committee on 8 January 2024.

Some of the key points made by SaxaVord representatives to the Committee are summarised below. These points do not necessarily reflect the view of the Committee.

- SaxaVord's most important message for the UK and Scottish Governments was the need for speed in decision-making, and the need for a figure in government to take ownership of space.
- Orbital operations from SaxaVord will require a number of different licences from regulators. The relationship with the Civil Aviation Authority is positive, but it is

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee was also accompanied by its specialist adviser, Professor Malcolm McDonald.

important that the CAA has the necessary resources to process the expected number of launch operator applications.

- A long-term solution will be needed to the airspace change necessary for SaxaVord's launch operations to take place.
- A marine licence from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate is also necessary, but the Directorate does not appear to be resourced for this, and added political will would be beneficial.
- It would also be beneficial to streamline the process for obtaining permissions under the Air Navigation Order (ANO), to support emerging companies to undertake sub-orbital launches as part of their development.
- Compared with other spaceports internationally, the SaxaVord launch site (including the launch pad and integration hangar) is very close to the domestic site (where mission control operations will take place).
- SaxaVord is already generating revenue, including through its ground station business.
- Staff at SaxaVord had backgrounds in a range of sectors, including some which might not be thought to have obvious similarities to the space sector. This illustrates the transferability of skills.



*Committee Members and SaxaVord staff against the backdrop of the launch site on Lamba Ness peninsula, Unst.*

### *Shetland Fishermen's Association*

Whilst in Shetland, the Committee took the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Shetland Fishermen's Association, aboard pelagic trawler *Adenia*, which was docked in Mair's Quay, Lerwick. The Committee met with Daniel Lawson and Sheila Keith, Executive Officers, Shetland's Fishermen's Association, and a number of local skippers.

The Committee toured the *Adenia*, and observed the impressive standard of onboard facilities in Scotland's modern fishing fleet.

The Committee discussed with Mr Lawson, Ms Keith and others the challenges Shetland's fishing sector faces, particularly in respect of rising operating costs, quota management, and access to affordable finance for Shetland's self-employed, family-owned fleet.



*Committee Members afront the Adenia, docked at Mair's Quay, Lerwick.*

### *Islands Growth Deal*

The Committee was hosted at Lerwick Town Hall by Shetland Islands Council Leader, Councillor Emma Macdonald to discuss current projects in Shetland as part of the Islands Growth Deal. Attendees from the Islands Deal Shetland Programme Board included, amongst others:

- Maggie Sandison, Shetland Islands Council Chief Executive
- Neil Grant, Shetland Islands Council Director of Development Services
- John Smith, Shetland Islands Council Director of Infrastructure Services

- Robert Sinclair, Shetland Islands Council Executive Manager, Assets Commissioning and Procurement (and Programme Manager for the Knab Redevelopment Project)
- Tommy Coutts, Shetland Islands Council Executive Manager, Economic Development
- Peter Peterson, Shetland Islands Council Executive Manager, Executive Services
- Hazel Tait, Shetland Islands Council Team Leader, Accountancy
- Louise Shearer, Shetland Islands Council Islands Deal Shetland Programme Co-ordinator
- Katrina Wiseman, Highlands and Islands Enterprise Area Manager, Shetland
- Jane Lewis, UHI Shetland Principal

The Committee heard presentations from leaders of the following projects being delivered in Shetland through the Islands Growth Deal, following by Q&A:

- **Knab Redevelopment** (delivered by Robert Sinclair (as above) and Craig Nicolson, Housing Programme Manager, Shetland Islands Council).
- **Dales Voe Ultra-Deep Water Quay** (delivered by Calum Grains, Chief Executive, and Sheila Duncan, Chief Finance officer, Lerwick Port Authority).
- **Shell-volution** (delivered by Michael Tait, Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group Chair and Shetland Mussels Managing Director, and Gregg Arthur, UHI Shetland Aquaculture Manager).
- **Shetland Clean Energy Project** (delivered by Douglas Irvine, Shetland Islands Council, Future Energy Executive Manager, and Joe Najduch, Shetland Islands Council Future Energy Project Manager).
- **Shetland Campus Redevelopment** (delivered by Stephen Martin, UHI Shetland Project Manager).



*Committee Members meeting Council and Islands Deal Shetland Programme Board members at Lerwick Town Hall.*