

Moray Economic Partnership – Meeting Note

6th August, Training Room 1, Annexe, Elgin

Attendees	Cllr Cowe (JC) – Chair; James Johnston (JJ) – Vice Chair; Frances Webster (FW) – Skills Development Scotland; Anthony Standing (AS) – Skills Development Scotland; Tom McGarry (TMcG) – University of Highlands and Islands; Margery McLennan (MM) – Chamber of Commerce; Richard Hartland (RH) – Moray Council; David Oxley (DO) – Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Ranald Robertson (RR) – HITRANS; Andrew Anderson (AA) – Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Cllr Coull (GC) – Moray Council; Reni Milburn (RM) – Moray Council; Cllr Murdoch (FM) – Moray Council; Cllr Leadbitter (GL) – Moray Council; Cllr Wright (AW) – Moray Council; David Duncan (DD) – Moray Council; Gordon Sutherland (GS) – Moray Council; Peter Jones (PJ) – Moray Council; Amanda Walker – Moray Council.
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1. Introductions

JC welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that everyone introduced themselves. It was noted that this was the first official meeting with Cllr John Cowe as the Chair, having been appointed at the meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure committee in June, and also that after this meeting Frances Webster would replace Anthony Standing as the representative in the partnership for Skills Development Scotland.

2. **Apologies:** Andrew Fowlie – NHS Grampian; George McNeil – Chamber of Commerce. Apologies also given from James Johnston and Andrew Anderson who were both scheduled to arrive during the course of the meeting.

3. Meeting note 4th June 2013

Several points were made against the most recent meeting note:-

- Para 5: Media Services Proposal –
The contract for media provider is currently being advertised and to date there have been approximately 20 expressions of interest. It is anticipated that evaluation of submitted tenders will take place during the week commencing 9th September and that GS, PJ, FM, Lesley Gallagher and a council procurement officer will make up the evaluation panel.
- Broadband –
RH met with representatives from BT broadband to identify planning permissions and road closures to facilitate any roll out of broadband in this area. BT will give a presentation to Full Council in the near future and the MEP will be invited to attend.
- All Energy follow up –
There will be a meeting in the next few weeks.
- Gatwick – Inverness flight slots -
Letter sent to SCDI from MEP in support of continuing and supporting access.
- Moray Chamber of Commerce Awards (Sept 6th) –

DO and GS review on panel 21st August.

4. **Chairman's Update**

JC noted the commitment of the MEP and the valuable resource it provides for local economic development, and also recognised the input of the previous Chair, Jim Royan, to whom he owes a debt of gratitude.

JC recognised the considerable progress made to date by the MEP including successes such as the employment of 31 staff by Accunostics in Forres, the opening of new factories by both Baxters and Walkers, and the near completion of the Life Sciences Centre. The main task ahead is to consolidate these successes and to learn from missed opportunities to ensure regional economic development and diversification.

The Chair also noted a number of recent local events:-

- RAF Lossiemouth annual reception
- Family and friends day
- Armed forces day
- European pipe band championships (estimated £2 million contribution to the local economy). Congratulations to David Urquhart and his committee for their work in making the event so successful. To be held again in 2014 and 2105.
- Speyside Whisky Festival (estimated £1.6 million contribution to the local economy).
- Speyfest
- Six day orienteering festival with 3500 participants. To be held locally again in 2015.
- Lossie raft race due to be held 11th August.

Since June the Chair has attended the following:-

- Meeting with BID every two weeks. In September there will be a food and drink event on the High Street.
- 1 – 1 with Jim Royan.
- Flag European Fisheries meeting.
- 1 – 1 with TMcG.
- Meeting with the editor of the Northern Scot and RH to discuss the promotion of the MEP and a monthly business editorial.
- 1 – 1 Ian Widdowson – Chair of Marketing at Elgin BID
- 1 – 1 DO.
- Conference call with AF.
- Meeting at Atos with Gavin Thomson, RH and GS.
- Meeting with Accunostics with Karen Morrison, RH and GS.
- Several meetings with the organisers of the six day orienteering festival.
- Several meetings with the Lossiemouth Lighthouse Community Company Ltd. Moray Towns Partnership to make £5,000 grant funding to contribute to additional safety measures, it is anticipated that the lighthouse will be open to the public at the end of August.
- Major East and West beach clean ups – tv celebrity Clive Anderson, who was on holiday in the area, joined in the clean up.

5. **European Funding (2014 – 2020 Programme)**

RM discussed the forthcoming changes to European funding programme. At present proposals are submitted to the Scottish Government as a 'challenge fund'. However, going forward, the Government wants strategic delivery bodies to be established, possibly made up of a number of partner agencies, to access and use European funding. There will be a stronger focus on outputs and outcomes.

At a local level, RM asked that each of the theme groups identify which of their prioritised projects would benefit/be suitable for European funding, and suggested a workshop of facilitated discussion for this.

It was noted that the existing LAG and FLAG are not suitable delivery mechanisms for the new programme. It was also noted that Moray has an advantage in that, through the MES, its projects have already been identified. One of the main challenges will be securing match funding.

It was recognised that this is an important opportunity not to be missed and that the MEP needed to coordinate its efforts, including the establishment of suitable governance of constituent groups, in order increase the opportunity for securing funding and for the subsequent implementation of projects. Working with the business community will be required.

ACTION: RM to attend the next meeting of each of the theme groups to discuss European funding in respect of their projects. This should be concluded by the end of September in order that RM can feed results into the regional programme by the end of December. It was agreed that a programme, agenda and list of participants be provided to the Chair and RH, and that an additional meeting of the MEP Leadership Cohort be set up to bring together information gathered by RM.

6. **Moray College Campus Redevelopment**

TMcG provided a summary of the proposed phased redevelopments of the Moray College campus including a recap on the history of the project and changes to the proposals. Although identified as a priority project, funding may become available in chunks rather than in one lump sum and so the redevelopment of the campus is being designed to be may be carried out in phases.

The current estimated cost of the overall redevelopment is £43 million but a sizable proportion of this has been identified for contingencies, (the actual build cost being closer to £20 million) and so the final cost may be less than this.

The architect is currently altering the plans with major changes being made to the revision of the sports facilities. The two most significant phases will be work on the Birnie and Grange/Pluscarden wings both of which do not currently have disabled access. Other changes include enhancement of the Beechtree restaurant and moving the nursery back into the main building.

Consideration is also being taken of curriculum requirements and changes such as the possible need for a spa facility. It was noted that the Strategic Business Forum could help broker conversations to potentially work in partnership with hoteliers should this be taken forward as part of the curriculum.

It is anticipated that the revised architect plans will be ready within six to eight weeks.

Depending upon completion of works and the signing of the completion certificate by building standards, it is possible that the Life Science Centre will open the week commencing the 9th September.

RH suggested that council building standards officers attend the next meeting with the contractors to avoid any possible delay.

The lecture theatre will provide video conference facilities for students and also for the business community. There is potential for the facility to be hired out to the conference market and work has begun in marketing it. It may be a valuable resource for small start up businesses as well as for hosting large scale conferences. However, it was noted that parking may be an issue and early thought and discussions should be sought with potential partners to provide shared parking facilities in particular the council.

7. MES Programme – Tourism and Culture

AA provided the group with a hand out report on the progress of the Tourism and Culture group. A Tourism Development Strategy has been finalised and is scheduled to be launched at a joint meeting with Moray Council at the Life Science Centre in November. The strategy aims to capitalise on local activities and to bring together the efforts of individual towns to result in a Moray tourism business approach.

Arts, culture and heritage are integral elements of tourism and culture and so a separate strategy is in development which will encourage joint working and ensure a more strategic approach to improve opportunities to promote Moray as an attractive place to stay, work and visit.

Although the MES states that Moray is underperforming in tourism, it is doing better than other areas in Scotland and the range of events highlighted in the Chair's summary provides evidence of this.

The lack of hotels across Moray and the implications this has for business and tourism was discussed. Going forward as the area is promoted further for tourism and business opportunities this will be an ongoing constraint. There is an opportunity for the Development group to work with the Tourism and Culture group to stimulate growth in this area. This may include from a land use planning perspective a non site specific approach to considering suitable locations.

AS asked if there had been any further news about the possibility of using any vacant/underused assets at Kinloss to support the local economy.

GS informed the group that a meeting had been held last week between the Scotland Office, the Scottish Government and the MOD with regards to the next steps following the basing optimisation programme which may identify spare capacity for local use of facilities at Kinloss Barracks. However, there may be limitations to this in terms of maintaining security and safety issues of allowing civilian users on the site.

Possible future actions include liaison with the Northern Scot and other media to promote any hotel developments/refurbishments, and the development of a database of existing provision.

GC also gave a statement on Tourism and Culture and outlined the Worldhost programme that provides customer service training to ensure high quality service which will be rolled out with businesses and accommodation providers.

8. Hot Topics

Proposal for CNPA to join MEP

After discussion it was agreed that FM would invite the CNPA to become a member of the MEP. It was agreed that this could provide valuable knowledge and expertise particularly in terms of attracting young people to stay and/or come to the area. AW commented that during his term on the Cairngorm Park Board he found that the CNPA group has drive and enthusiasm and that working with them on the regeneration of Tomintoul had been a real partnership effort. GL added that CNPA would be a valuable asset to the MEP in terms of its contribution to discussion on transportation links across Moray, Highland and Aberdeenshire.

Replacement MEP link for Culture and Tourism Programme

Margery McLennan will be the new link for the Culture and Tourism Programme.

Update on media services procurement

PJ advised that Moray Council is the first organisation to sign up to a national contract negotiated by the Scottish Government with NASDAQ for the provision of a web-based platform that will be used to promote MEP. The platform is currently being constructed and should be complete by the end of September. LEADER and match funding have been secured for the project that will cost £21,000 for the first year, including set up costs, and £13,000 annually thereafter.

The site will have links to all individual MEP member organisations' sites and each organisation is encouraged to regularly submit content. The site will provide a one-stop-shop for the media and the public and will help to develop a 'common narrative' for the promotion of Moray. GS noted that this was an important milestone for the MEP.

The second part of the media services procurement is the advertisement of the contract for a media provider – as discussed at item 3 above.

ACTION: MEP members to provide PJ with details of a contact person with responsibility for their organisation's input to the site.

Next meeting – proposed topic for discussion

It was agreed that at the next meeting of the MEP there will be a discussion on how the MEP can assist in the development of the Life Sciences. DO is happy to work with AF on this.

ACTION: to be added to the next agenda.

9. AOCB

Proposed workshop

JJ reiterated the need for continued momentum for the implementation of the MES. After an 18 month period of success, the MEP is now entering a more steady, business like period in delivering the MES. In order to be able to demonstrate the progress of the MEP JJ recommended that each theme group carry out a review of their potential risks to delivery as well as identifying possible performance indicators. In addition, there would need to be a review across all the theme groups the dependencies and relationships with regard to delivery; consequently we would start to understand the relative performance of theme group areas against the overall delivery of the MES. GS suggested that the Risk and Performance Measurement requirement is raised at the next Programme Manager's Meeting to be held on 15th August; with the Chair's consent GM would liaise direct with JJ to start the process of providing the assurance regime around the MES delivery.

It was agreed that the MEP website and continued liaison with the press will help to demonstrate progress against the MES. RH informed the group that Full Council had, as part of its area based review, identified economic development as its top priority which therefore dovetails in with the work of the MEP. Part of the area based review is to re-examine how the council delivers its services.

ACTION:-

A discussion to take place at the next Programme Manager's Meeting on 15 August and groups to be invited to discuss at a later date.

Inverness to Gatwick Service

In June Easyjet bought Flybe's Inverness to London air slots. Although it was at first thought that there would be increased frequency, frequency will remain the same but capacity will be increased on each flight. The Inverness to Gatwick same day return is being kept but for London-based workers, the day return service is Luton to Inverness which is a less convenient route.

Representatives from the Davies Commission will come to Moray later this year as part of the review of UK airports commissioned last year by the UK Government.

The UK Government has launched a new regional air connectivity fund in which £10 million will be made available to ensure that regions that will not benefit from the new high speed rail network will also have improved transport links.

Bus

Moray Council's initial bid for funding for a bus service to the central belt has not been approved and officers are waiting more detailed feedback on their submission.

Rail

The official launch of the 'Lifting the Spirit' project is scheduled for 13 September.

Planning permission for the single platform rail halt at Inverness Airport is being pursued.

HIE

DO noted that James Jones has employed a further 17 people in the last 8 weeks and now employs over 80 people. The firm has submitted expansion plans to the council for approval.

HIE, SDS and Business Gateway have developed presentations for representative teaching staff from each of Moray's secondary schools. These presentations will be rolled out during September and will provide information on the local economy and job opportunities. There is an opportunity to expand this further by liaising with local businesses to establish their existing and future employment needs.

Moray College

Further curriculum development includes a review of computing and IT courses. There is an opportunity to liaise with local businesses, again to establish employability links but also for smaller businesses to work with larger scale businesses in terms of training and support.

Future Events

- Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme launch - 13th August
- RAF Scotland press day at RAF Lossiemouth– 14th August

10. Future Meetings

- Wednesday 9th October, 930am: Moray College Life Science Centre
- Tuesday 3rd December, 930am: Springfield Properties tbc
- February 2014
- May 2014