

## Moray Economic Partnership

### Teams Meeting

Wednesday 24 February 2021 @ 14:00

Graham Leadbitter (Chair)	Moray Council
John Cowe	Councillor, Moray Council
Kara Stewart	Moray Chamber of Commerce
Laurie Piper	Visit Moray Speyside
Michael O'Donnell	Moray Council
Pearl Hamilton	FSB
Rona Campbell	HIE
Sarah Medcraf	Moray Chamber of Commerce
Stephen Sheridan	SDS
Stuart Black	HIE
Tim Eagle	Councillor, Moray Council
Kerry Williams (Minutes)	HIE

### Apologies

Katherine Mackintosh	Robertson
Andrew Anderson	tsiMoray
David Patterson	Moray College UHI
Jim Grant	Moray Council
Rhona Gunn	Moray Council
Dr Jamie Hogg	NHS Grampian
Ewen Mackintosh	Gordon & MacPhail

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome by Chair</b> Welcome from Chair and apologies given.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes from last meeting and matters arising</b> Previous minutes agreed and no matters arising.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Round Table Update</b>  <b>Graham</b> GL commended the focus on the high number of business grants being processed and the additional pressures on normal workload of the Council.  The Discretionary Grant (DG) had a boost in applicants after a successful social media campaign.  The Revenues team will be administering the B&B fund due to go live later in the week.	

Moray Council are in the final week of budget negotiations and amendments will be set out next week.

**Tim**

Echoed comments from GL about getting money out to businesses ASAP. He has received queries from constituents concerning new businesses. Is there early support available to them? GL responded saying that proof of trading over a period of time is required. There have been a number of fraudulent claims and issues around furlough but he is in talks with Richard Lochhead about this. If sufficient funds allow, the criteria for DG may be amended to allow other businesses who previously missed out on other grants to be able to apply.

TE stated there will be an expected increase in staycations once restrictions are lifted and to make sure that premises are ready for opening and Council services are in place. LP commented there is a definite appetite to reopen and facilities such as campervan waste need to be considered in line with the RTIF. He said it would be useful to have the Cairngorm National Park and the Council actively engaged with the community in preparedness with a timeline in place.

**Stephen**

The Careers Service is continuing online and considering their service offer in schools. There are partnership events planned in March for employers and parents/guardians.

There have been a number of high-profile redundancies in the press and PACE has been implemented. Skills Development Scotland and the College continue their provision, sharing intelligence and potential job opportunities.

SDS are supporting partners in the MGD, especially in maths and science, and the education opportunities at the end of the deal.

**Sarah**

Reports from Moray Chamber members that it has been a difficult time recently. In the past couple of weeks, 44 different funding schemes have gone live. Eagerly awaiting the budget announcement but nothing has been mentioned about furlough dates.

**Michael**

Has been assisting the Economic Development team processing grants over the past couple of months. He has been working on the procurement for the media contract for MEP for the new financial year. Recruitment for a Community Wealth-building post is underway.

**Stuart**

Over £33M of grants have been processed through HIE for the whole of the Highlands and Islands and there have been a lot more business interactions. £2M has been made available for the Wedding Support Services Fund where many support services who have been affected by the wedding trade can

	<p>apply for funding. The Lecht has recently been supported through the Ski Resort Fund. HIE are now getting back to business as usual with a good pipeline of projects going forwards.</p> <p>Brexit remains a challenge for exporters.</p> <p><b>Rona</b> There is now a full complement of surgeons at Dr Gray’s Hospital and RC continues to work with the NHS on recruitment and retention. RC is now chairing the Talent Attraction sub-group and working with DYW on an engagement plan with young people as part of the growth deal and seeing what else the group can do in addition.</p> <p>It was suggested that there should be clarification on the remit of the MEP TA sub-group, with separate strands that could add value but not to duplicate work of other groups. RC to continue work on talent attraction and wider population issues across Moray as well as the H&amp;I.</p> <p><b>Action: MEP to advise on direction going forwards</b></p> <p><b>Pearl</b> PH provided the results summary of the FSB survey recently sent out which showed worrying statistics on mental health and more businesses in the north struggling to stay afloat. Full details of the survey can be found as a footnote*.</p> <p><b>John</b> Pleased that the DG had received additional funding (from £30M to £120M) and can reach more businesses. Although SG are announcing new grants, it is frustrating that guidelines are not coming until sometime later.</p> <p>Customer relationship management systems (CRMs) have been invaluable during the lockdown restrictions. SB confirmed that HIE will be introducing a new customer interface shortly called MyHIE.</p> <p><b>Laurie</b> There is concern that the criteria for the Guest House fund has changed – the properties now have to be listed on approved sites which is challenging. Concerns that it will be impossible for Moray Council to contact every individual guest house/B&amp;B.</p> <p>Timescale for the return of visitors is a concern across tourism businesses.</p> <p><b>Action: GL to report back on B&amp;B fund criteria.</b></p>	<p>RC/SS/GL</p> <p>GL</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Economic Recovery Update</b> MO made reference to the Recovery Strategy and KPIs circulated to members. Support for SMEs (import and export) is available via Business Gateway although support for procurement activity has not been accessed yet.</p> <p>SM commented that it is good to have KPIs for recovery but there's nothing to measure the existing 4000 businesses staying afloat. She suggested we should</p>	

	<p>focus on firms we already have to progress recovery and how best to measure this in an accurate way. There is no failure rate in the reports but effects of CBILS and Bounce Back Loans are not known yet. SB suggested measuring the success of existing businesses via a survey or monitoring of situation perhaps using HIE account managed clients to get a snapshot. Could also work in partnership, data gathering with accountants, solicitors and estate agents who have useful migration data. This could measure those who have moved/stayed put because of circumstances eg those who no longer need to move to other areas because they can work from home.</p> <p>SM highlighted the report from the Chamber that it is important that MEP has a level of understanding of what businesses are facing day in and day out. Data reports can be updated to measure progress. GL said there is now some items from the economic recovery paper that have been accelerated, such as non-domestic rates being re-committed – the situation is responsive and changing.</p> <p>There is a concern that even if town centre businesses are allowed to operate on a tier system, they are doing so at 50% occupancy which is not viable for smaller businesses. More employees/residents needed in town centres as soon as possible to bring life back to the town. MCC will update paper giving vacancy rate comparisons on last quarter. GL suggested that positive and negative impacts should be recorded.</p> <p><b>Action: Update on economic recovery document needed. SM/KS</b></p> <p>With reference to the Kickstart scheme, SM said that she needs to know when placements will be going live in order to keep the Job Centre updated on the situation.</p> <p>Apprenticeship funding was announced pre-Christmas. SM asked SS if he had noticed an increase of inquiries. He said that Furlough is masking the challenge but there are recruitment opportunities and investment support for employers.</p> <p><b>Action: SS to report back on apprenticeship numbers.</b></p>	<p>SM/KS</p> <p>SS</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Moray Growth Deal Progress</b></p> <p>Moray Growth Deal is progressing well. Awaiting feedback from UK and Scottish Governments on all the MGD project Outline Business Cases that have been submitted. Time is getting tight to make amendments on any comments before the election period.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Digital Update</b></p> <p>Stuart Robertson and Donnie Morrison from HIE gave a presentation on digital connectivity within Moray. They told MEP that Moray has good broadband connectivity compared to the rest of the Highlands and Islands region. 88% of households achieve 30mbps and a proportion of towns are receiving fibre although Fibre to the Premises coverage is still low. Scottish</p>	

	<p>Government are managing the R100 contract with Openreach. The website <a href="http://www.scotlandsuperfast.com">www.scotlandsuperfast.com</a> lists the status for the North Lot contract which should be going live in a few months.</p> <p>There is a level of uncertainty for communities applying for the broadband voucher scheme. An interim voucher (up to £400) is available up to the end of 2021 until BT instal full broadband. Mobile and satellite antennae can be installed to improve household broadband.</p> <p>Mobile sites are increasing and being upgraded to 4G but no rush for 5G. Moray has good coverage, although Ofcom coverage doesn't always agree with what local people are saying. Public experience is useful in identifying mobile not-spots.</p>	
7.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>None</p>	
	<p><b>Actions</b></p> <p><b>MEP to advise on direction of talent attraction work going forwards eg young people.</b></p> <p><b>GL to report back on B&amp;B fund criteria.</b></p> <p><b>Update on economic recovery document needed.</b></p> <p><b>SS to report back on apprenticeship numbers.</b></p>	<p><b>JG/SB</b></p> <p><b>GL/JG</b></p> <p><b>All to input</b></p> <p><b>SS</b></p>

#### **Date and Time of next meeting**

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Time: 2:00pm – 4:00pm**

All further meetings scheduled for last Wednesday of each quarter between 2:00 – 4:00pm as follows:

25 August

24 November

### \* FSB Survey

Snap Survey of 1200 Scottish entrepreneurs has found:

- Two fifths of business owners say they're worried about their mental health
- Almost a half (48%) of businesses in the Highlands, Islands and Moray are closed (40% by law, 8% voluntarily) as against just over a third (35%) in Scotland as a whole (30% by law and 5% voluntarily) and a fifth (20%) in Glasgow (17% by law, 3% voluntarily).
- More than half of the respondents (55%) said that they had concerns about the survival of their business
- 45% were worried about keeping up-to-date with changing government regulations.
- 30% said that repaying debt weighed on their mind
- 42% are worried about their pay or the income of their family.
- If we compare businesses in the North- Highlands and Moray more of the North's businesses are struggling to stay afloat 31% H,I+M; compared to 28% across all of Scotland and 25% in Glasgow

From this we called for the Scottish Government to pilot a new support service specifically for small business owners and the self-employed to prevent a mental health crisis which was included in our budget ask to Kate Forbes and in our manifesto for the elections.