

Moray Economic Partnership
Wednesday 27 May 2026 (2.00pm - 4.00pm)

Venue: HIE Board Room, The Apex, Forres Enterprise Park, Forres, IV36 2AB

Attendees:	
Sarah Medcraf (Chair)	Moray Chamber of Commerce (MCC)
Rhona Gunn	The Moray Council (TMC)
Michael Kelly	TMC
Eily Webster	TMC
Sonya Warren	TMC
Mike Duncan	Federation of Small Business (FSB)
David Reid	Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)
Jackie MacLaren	tsiMoray
David Patterson	UHI Moray
David Jackson	Visit Scotland
Carol Wink (Minutes)	HIE

Apologies:	
Beverly Smith	TMC
Marc Macrae	TMC
Sandy Keith	TMC
Claire Sim	Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

1	Welcome and Apologies Sarah Medcraf (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed Eily Webster, Moray Council, to the MEP.
2	Matters arising not on the agenda No matters arising.
3	Minute and actions from previous meeting <u>Update on actions</u> Sarah Medcraf reported that responses to the grid connectivity survey, largely submitted by organisations experiencing issues, had been shared with SSEN to help determine next steps. The minute from 3 March 2026 was agreed.

4	Discussion on Approvals Required <u>UKSPF Underspend</u> UKSPF year-end reporting identified an underspend across capital and revenue budgets. It was proposed that the capital element be allocated to the Gordon Arms Hotel, Elgin High Street project to support acquisition costs. As no competing bids were received for the revenue element, it was proposed that this allocation be used to extend the Town Centre Development role by a further two months. MEP members formally approved these proposals.
5	Moray Growth Deal - update Michael Kelly reported on progress, highlighting achievements to date and outlining key milestones currently being progressed. Highlights include: • Early Years STEM was successfully launched, with over 300 people attending public sessions held over easter. • Completion of 39 affordable homes at Speyview, Aberlour. • The legal agreement for the Business Enterprise Hub/Housing Mix project is now signed with construction scheduled to begin in early June 2026 and an anticipated opening around January 2028. • The Cultural Quarter – Grant Lodge project has made good progress, including the appointment of a Development Officer, with ongoing work focused on tender options, pricing, and the phasing of construction works. Inflationary pressures and some funding gaps were noted however work is ongoing to secure additional funding streams and to keep projects moving forward.
6	Verbal discussion on private/public sector opportunities/challenges <u>Workforce North Co Investment Fund update</u> The Workforce North Co-Investment Fund to support workforce development initiatives across the region was discussed, with the following points highlighted: - A recent workshop to develop a skills roadmap was noted and that the Moray plan will be tailored to Moray's priorities rather than replicating other regions - Concerns were raised about a lack of clarity around governance, funding allocation processes and application timelines - There is a risk the fund may operate on a first-come, first-served basis - Concern that Moray could be disadvantaged without ready-to-progress projects - The fund appears to be open to a wide range of applicants, including the private sector, which may secure significant funding quickly - A clear need for improved information sharing and readiness across HIREP partners for local dissemination was highlighted

	- Important to focus on developing a locally relevant approach on workforce upskilling and reskilling See attached link providing early detail of the aforementioned fund: https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/86640/8.%2520Workforce%2520North <u>Large scale events</u> David Jackson led the discussion on tourism, events and major opportunities for Moray. It was noted that the current approach to events is largely reactive, due to the absence of a dedicated strategy and funding, and that there is no single body leading the strategic direction. The need for a coordinated tourism and/or events strategy was highlighted. The lack of economic impact data limiting the ability to justify investment and attract future events was raised, alongside the need for clearer processes to capture and respond to new opportunities. It was noted that there would be value in undertaking a strategic review of major events and longer-term opportunities for Moray, while also considering the region's capacity to host events, including infrastructure and volunteer needs. <u>Scotland Loves Local/Scotland's Towns Partnership</u> <u>Elgin BID</u> Sarah Medcraf discussed a conversation that she had with Scotland's Towns Partnership. STP advised there could be seed funding available for a future BID. Sarah reported that business feedback suggests there is currently limited demand for a new BID following the outcome of the previous BID ballot. It was felt that the BID model may need to be reviewed if another BID is pursued. While Moray Chamber of Commerce is delivering aspects of the work previously undertaken by BID, it is not positioned to take on a leading role. MEP members went on to discuss the Tourism Visitor Levy. It was highlighted that a clear consultation process and good communication will be needed. Clear plans for how the funding will be used will help gain support from stakeholders. It was also thought important that income is reinvested into tourism infrastructure to show clear benefits, and that the levy aligns with the wider tourism strategy.
7	Key Topic Focus <u>MEP Partnership Review</u> Rhona Gunn reported that since the last MEP structure and governance review was undertaken during 2024, significant changes have taken place in the wider economic and policy environment with an increased emphasis from both the Scottish and UK Governments in regional economic collaboration and partnerships. For Moray, this is most clearly reflected in the growing prominence of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP). MEP's role is to support economic governance, bring partners together, and help to deliver Moray's economic priorities and it was agreed that consideration is needed to identify a small number of targeted changes to sharpen MEP's focus and impact. During discussion, it was noted that MEP remains a valuable partnership platform, supporting collaboration, shared insight and providing a collective Moray voice at a

	regional level; however, concerns were raised regarding the inconsistent effectiveness of subgroups, capacity pressures across partner organisations, and a perceived council-led agenda. The Moray Economic Strategy (MES), last updated in 2022, was considered still largely relevant but requiring refinement to strengthen links to measurable outcomes and future funding opportunities. The Moray Council is progressing an Economic Review and Summit which will include post-2030 planning providing a stimulus for more aspirational, medium to longer-term actions and targeted at future funding requirements. This needs to be supported by partner data and analysis. It was agreed that MEP should continue to operate as a strategic, discussion-led forum focused on collaboration rather than delivery and supported by partners proactively contributing agenda items. Subgroups should be retained but refocused on fewer, clearer priorities and given time to mature. There was also strong consensus that in-person meetings are more effective than virtual formats. Action: HIE to circulate the February 2025 update MES framework for action as agreed by MEP to Rhona Gunn. Action: HIE to update the MES master document with the aforementioned update text and send to Moray Council for uploading onto MyMoray, noting that this will change again once the updated MES document has been actioned and agreed.
8	AOB Date of next meeting – Wednesday 23 September 2026
9	Close Sarah Medcraf thanked everyone for their attendance and brought the meeting to a close.

Summary of actions	
HIE to circulate the February 2025 update MES framework for action as agreed by MEP to Rhona Gunn.	HIE
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