

Moray Economic Strategy (MES)–Implementation Programme Status Update January to March 2014

Overall

- The Partnership met February 13, 2014 hosted by Gordonstoun School, Duffus. Items considered included the Regional Skills Investment Plan, information about MiScotland a digital infrastructure service to support business in Moray, and Moray 2023, and the 10 year plan of the Community Planning Partnership. The latter has been drawn up to guide CPP activities and to express its intended outcomes for the community. The partnership received a regular report on Communications and Engagement and scrutinised the work of the Inward Investment and Business Growth programme of the strategy.
- Partner pages of the media centre “newsroom” have been prepared. Launch of the portal has been delayed until April by IT access issues. The newsroom has been purchased by the partnership to provide information about implementation of the Moray Economic Strategy. It will identify Moray as a place to live work and invest. Partners have the ability to put information on the newsroom about themselves and their activities.
- Communications during this period have included articles in Executive Magazine (January edition) the Scotsman Feb 18 (MEP adversity to ambition) Northern Scot, March 7 (Strategic Business Forum, Tourism Strategy), Commercial Property Monthly (Buckie Harbour). On January 21, BBC Radio 4 carried a 6 minute item on the World Tonight which outlined the successful response made in Moray to the closure of RAF Kinloss as a lesson for other communities experiencing an economic shock.
- On March 3 & 4 the partnership hosted a masterplan workshop (Charette) to envision the future of land uses at Lossie Green Elgin (a strategic development site adjoining the town centre). Development objectives include integration with the town centre and Cooper Park. The event was attended by over 60 invited stakeholders and will be used to shape a further engagement with the community later this year. The work shop considered the potential future uses of the site and the feasibility to deliver the vision outlined in the Elgin City for the Future Plan.
- On March 7 the Culture and Tourism Programme hosted an engagement with tourism stakeholders marking the launch of the Moray Tourism Strategy attended by over 80 stakeholders.
- On March 18 the Council Policy and Resources Committee confirmed funding of £20,000/annum to add to £40,000/ annum funding from HIE. The partner contributions will allow Moray Chamber of Commerce to engage with stakeholders and deliver tourism development across Moray over the next three years.

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Tourism and Culture

Project: Establishing body with strong governance to deliver tourism development for Moray

- A new strategy for tourism development with proposal that implementation should be led by Moray Chamber of Commerce has been agreed with MEP. This will involve expansion of Moray Chamber of Commerce and employment of 1.5FTE specialist staff, and funding from the public sector. Strategy was launched at the Tourism Link Conference in the Alexander Graham Bell Centre on 7th March 2013 by Malcolm Roughead, CEO of Visit Scotland.

Project: Assist Hotel Development

- Development of 4/5 star hotel at Coleburn Distillery. Negotiations are taking place with funding partners, with support from HIE Business Growth Team.
- Development of 100 room hotel in Elgin. The owners of the North Port site which has been identified as a potential site for a hotel in the Moray Economic Strategy have stated that they are not interested in taking the development forward. Lack of sufficient accommodation has been identified as a limiting factor for establishment of the Alexander Graham Bell Centre as a venue for large conferences, and further work is required to identify a suitable site, or promote expansion of existing accommodation.

Project: Visitor Orientation

- The C&T Group and the Skills Group are working with People 1st with the aim of achieving WorldHost Destination status for Moray. Moray is one of 10 pilot areas identified in Scotland and People 1st has applied for funding from the Scottish Government to provide financial support for the pilot areas. Pilot courses have now been completed in Forres, Elgin, Fochabers and Buckie and the roll out of courses across Moray is being planned.
- The Malt Whisky Trail is a significant part of Moray's tourism offer, and it is now building on the development work led by the Institute of Innovation and Design to enhance the visitor experience provided by the MWT.
- Elgin BID is providing visitor information through its Visitor Information Point partnerships with retail businesses and looking at potential partnership with the St Giles Church.
- Arrangements are now complete for installation of an exhibition entitled Grain to Glass in the St Giles Church as part of the Speyside Whisky Festival. The exhibition will run from 17th April to 5th May.

Project: New Arts School/Centre

- Meetings have been held with National Trust for Scotland (NTS) over future development at Brodie Castle. This is now being considered by the Board of NTS.
- Hotel and Town Hall / Arts venue developments were considered at the Charette run by Moray Council for 3rd and 4th March. C&T Group will be participating in the Charette.

Project: Town Hall Feasibility Assessment

- C & T and Development Groups working together on this priority.

Project: Regional Sports Facility

- Whilst not a priority project for the C&T Group, it has been discussed and we see merit in making more use of existing resources such as the new Elgin academy and the large gymnasium at Kinloss Barracks to provide centres of excellence for a range of sports. Kim Paterson, Moray Council is advising our group.

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Skills and Training

- The Department of Work and Pension has now joined to group.
- The Skills and Training group (STG) continues to meet monthly. The priority plan has been amended and updated with actions completed and new actions. The plan will be finalised following the completion of the Skills Investment Plan which is still to happen.
- Terms of Reference have now been agreed. The STG and the Employability Action Group have met and agreed structure and process.
- Shared Apprenticeship Scheme pilot with People 1st for Moray has been discussed and the group recognise its fit with the STG and also meeting the needs of the MES. The pilot will offer 6 apprenticeship places in Food and Beverage Service level 2. Work is being undertaken to get employers on board and thereafter young people will be identified. An event to promote the scheme has been provisionally organised for the 19th May as part of Modern Apprenticeship week.
- The Employer Engagement/Business network event will now take place in June. The review of the Wood Commission may influence decisions therefore it was agreed that the event should take place following the publication of the review which is due to take place on the 7th May.
- The STG will lead on/support activities for Modern Apprenticeship week 19th – 23rd May.
- STG has been consulted and fed back on the Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP). Main area of concern being the lack of recognition for the 10% most distanced from the labour market and consideration of the supply side. One of the aims for the employer event is to determine employer needs.
- 4 courses have taken place for the World Host pilot. 10 trainers for Moray have been trained. The fuller roll out will take place in due course.

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Development

The Consultants' Report on **The Elgin City Centre Masterplan: Charrette** jointly funded by Moray Council and Scottish Government, is at Draft stage, and is scheduled to be completed in May. Subject to funding, it is intended to undertake a wider, public Charette during September 2014 to further inform the Masterplan, and include a more detailed financial appraisal. As a result of this Masterplan and related Development Brief, The MEP will have a proposition which can be used to market specific investment and development opportunities, which can contribute to the regeneration of central Elgin.

The development of the Masterplan will address and coordinate the following individual projects which are identified in The Moray Economic Strategy Action Plan:

- **Lossie Green Development Brief**
- **A96 North Development Brief**
- **Southern A96 Frontage Consolidation**
- **Town Hall Feasibility Assessment**
- **Bus Station Relocation**
- **Alexandra Road Improvements**
- **Lossie Green Multi Storey Car Park**
- **Replacement Lorry Park**
- **City Centre Lighting Strategy**
- **New Arts School / Centre**
- **Assist Hotel Development**

These projects are to be developed in conjunction with the other Programme Groups, and in particular Tourism and Culture, and Transportation.

Other live projects are:

- **Options Appraisal** for potential location of an all weather football pitch in central Elgin. One consideration of relevance for The MES is the potential loss of development value should an option be selected which requires land identified in the Lossie Green Masterplan.
- Proposed retail development at **Bogton Road, Forres**, including potential relocation of Forres Mechanics FC; Moray Council is to commission property and legal advice in order to assist in further consideration of proposal by developer.
- **Buckie Harbour.** Assisting Transportation Group in making plans which may lead to development and expansion of harbour.
- **Industrial Portfolio – Capital Development Programme.** A report on this Programme, which is intended to support the main aims/objectives of The Moray Economic Strategy by helping to diversify and grow the Moray

economy, was considered by the Council in March, when it was agreed to approve new industrial development projects detailed in the confidential report, including development of units at March Road, Buckie.

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Transportation

- **Lifting the Spirit pilot project** : Analysis of the findings from this pilot project have now been completed by HITRANS and it is hoped that arising from this work some Moray food sector companies may be encouraged to take up opportunities for using rail freight out of Elgin.
- **Developments at Buckie Harbour:** Design work is progressing on the refurbishment of the Old Net Store in Buckie to convert it to 6 new industrial units which it is hoped will provide for harbour-related activities. Planning application soon and anticipated completion end December 2014. Discussions are on-going with Forsyths to determine how the Council can assist with use of its land assets in the area. Marketing of the Buckie Shipyard is under way. Discussions with other harbour-related companies progressing with the hope that this may lead to future expansion and development of the harbour.
- **Dualling of the A96:** Work by the Transport Scotland design team and their consultant is continuing. The next liaison meeting with Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships is in April 2014 with a more focused meeting with Transport Scotland to discuss the A96 in Moray in early June.
- **A95 Craigellachie to Aviemore:** HITRANS have offered to contribute up to £20k to the Moray Economic Partnership for a study to determine the economic and operational benefits of improving parts of the A95, and to identify the work required to gain maximum benefits from relatively low cost improvements. This work has been delayed and will commence in April 2014.
- **Lossie Green, Elgin.** The 4 transportation theme projects linked to this proposal have been discussed with the consultants. These are the relocation of the Elgin Bus Station, the relocation of the Elgin Lorry Park, car parking and improvements to junctions and pedestrian facilities on Alexandra Road, and consideration of these transport issues will form an integral part of any development proposals.
- **Elgin Cycle Network:** The Council has submitted a bid for funding to Sustrans who are administering the £20m Government fund for "Community Links" projects. If the bid is successful it is proposed to construct a cycleway along the full length of the floodworks embankment running East - West through Elgin, and if possible, extended to Lhanbryde. This would link a significant number of residential areas with areas of employment and retail activities in the town, improving accessibility to jobs and to businesses.

- **Whisky Tourist Transport:** The need for local transport to cater for whisky tourists in Speyside during the summer months has been identified. It is proposed to work jointly with the Tourism and Culture group to assess feasibility and then liaise with the whisky industry to determine if there is a willingness to provide transport.

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Inward Investment and Business Growth

- **Inward Investment propositions:** Proposition delivered to Irish based company looking to locate in the Buckie/Keith area. Discussions are now ongoing with HIE's Business Growth Team around potential support. Discussions are underway with a number of prospective new tenants for units on Forres Enterprise Park and are at the initial stages of Heads of Terms.
- **Barmuckity (Elgin) Business Park:** Loan funding of £2.7m has been approved by HIE, negotiations regarding legal issues are proving more complex than expected.
- **Identification of Expansion Land:** Local Development plan is now at the consultation stage. Comments are being sought and are due back by the 2nd of May. A meeting has been set up between Moray Council and Forsyths Ltd to discuss expansion at both Buckie and Rothes.
- **Forres Enterprise Park:** Unit 11 has now been let to EFC Ltd, who have moved in. The first skid unit was successfully completed in early March and delivered to China.
- **Business Engagement:** A business engagement event was held at Horizon Scotland for the tenants of the Enterprise Park, presentations were heard from a number of companies. This event has now been planned as a regular event.
- **Buckie Harbour:** A report has been completed looking at preparing Buckie Harbour for Offshore wind O&M activity. A number of meetings have been held between Moray Council and HIE staff to set out a work plan – this continues. Buckie Shipyard is now being marketed by the Council to ascertain whether there is any interest in taking the site on in the private sector. HIE and Moray Council are taking a stand at All Energy in May to promote the harbour to the offshore wind industry. A number of meetings have been held with local companies that are looking to carry out a number of developments at the harbour, some of which are significant.

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