

Moray Economic Partnership – Meeting Note

4th October 2012, Council Chambers, Elgin

Attendees	Jim Royan (JR) – Chair; David Oxley (DO) & Lesley Gallagher (LG) - Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Cllr Murdoch (FM); Gordon Sutherland (GS) & Amanda Walker (AW) - Moray Council; Margery McLennan (MM) & George McNeil (GM) – Moray Chamber of Commerce; Dave Duthie (DD) - HITRANS
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1. HITRANS Overview

Dave Duthie provided an overview of the role of HITRANS including how it could add value as a member of the partnership. He highlighted the following opportunities:-

Road

- There is a Scottish Government commitment to dual the A9 by 2025.
- There is also a commitment to dual the A96 by 2030. Rather than dual existing roads, a new road line will be built that will facilitate optimum traffic flow by having a limited number of roundabouts and exits. Instead existing roads will enable local communities to access the new road. This will be a route that cuts the journey time to one hour between Elgin and Aberdeen and 30 minutes between Elgin and Inverness.
- While an upgrade of the A95 is not included in these major plans finances are available for discreet improvements.
- The present focus should be to get to a 'ready' state so that when funding becomes available projects can go ahead with limited delay. This will entail securing permissions and getting the ground ready.

Rail

- There is a commitment to improving commuting access between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2019. This involves inserting a loop in the track between Nairn and Inverness, and includes a new station at Dalcross providing access to Inverness Airport. The focus is on securing an hourly frequency service.
- The Chair joined the meeting at this point.

Bus

- Contact has been made with Stagecoach and Citylink regarding improved connectivity between Moray and the central belt. As connections can be made from Aviemore, the focus will be on improving bus routes to Aviemore. A route via the A95 which takes in Grantown, Forres, Lossiemouth and Elgin can serve the customer base of both RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss Barracks.

Air

- The development of airports and the availability of flight routes should not only focus on profitability but also on the benefit to the economy at large.
- 58% of Aberdeen services go through Heathrow. Access to UK regions could be improved through more UK destination flights from Heathrow. A third runway is needed as the biggest planes are the most valuable and regional flights are therefore more vulnerable to being dropped. International tourists are routed through Heathrow. Slots are needed for Inverness and Newquay.
- The direct flight from Inverness to Amsterdam is seen as beneficial with growing tourist traffic. A twice daily service would be better.
- Improvements at Dyce are more challenging; the A96 junction at Aberdeen Airport needs improvement.

General

- The benefits of improved connectivity to the north of Scotland were discussed in terms of encouraging international tourism and also the UK economy as a whole. The sectors of economic growth include rural area development and the A96 should be seen as a 'causeway of growth'. Better links between road, rail and air are also needed.
- The Chair stated that improved infrastructure would not only provide benefits to the north of Scotland but would also enable others to benefit from what the north has to offer.
- The Chair acknowledged the representation of all 5 local authorities in the HITRANS region. FM endorsed the inclusion of HITRANS in the membership of the Moray Economic Partnership.
- DD advocated using political levers to secure transportation improvements and infrastructure investment. DD cited the example of the investment made to the "Rest and Be Thankful" stretch of the A83 which was not a strategic transportation project.

ACTION: The Chair to send a formal letter of invitation to HITRANS to join the partnership.

2. Welcome From Chair

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

- 3. Apologies:** Anthony Standing (ASt) – Skills Development Scotland; Shane Rankin (SR) – Scottish Government; Richard Hartland (RH) – Moray Council; Mike Devenney (MD) – Moray College; Andrew Fowlie (AF) – NHS Grampian.

The Chair advised that while a depute system had been set up for those unable to attend meetings; this did not seem to be working in practice. The development of the organisational structure and governance arrangements should improve this.

4. Meeting Note August 9 approved

5. Chairman's Update

Since the last meeting the Chair had the following updates:-

- Business Breakfast, Johnstons: useful input received. Thanks given to GM for hosting the meeting.
- Business Engagement event, Beechtree, Moray College: good attendance and desire to begin implementation of the Moray Economic Strategy.
- ASCEF Summit: thanks given to FM for attending. The maintenance and nurturing of working relationships with the Scottish Government was highlighted as essential in the further development of the local economy.
- Chamber of Commerce dinner: a successful event. A thanks was given for the endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce to the Moray Economic Partnership.
- Digital Health Conference Dinner, RAF Lossiemouth: provided an opportunity to engage with the business community and, as it was held at RAF Lossiemouth, 'added value' for delegates was provided through the use of the aeroplane simulator.
- Visit to AG Engineering, Forres: follow up visit post-opening of their extension. This is a good example of a vibrant local business.

- One-to-one meeting with Brian Higgs from Diageo: a nomination will be made for a Speyside representative to sit on the Strategic Business Forum.
- One-to-one meeting with Dale Winchester: a highly developed business prospectus has been put together for the Coleburn project and investment is being sought for the venture.
- September 28, Lunch and Learn event outlined the journey taken to develop the Moray Economic Strategy. This was attended by approximately 50 people at the Elgin Museum.
- Briefed Moray College management team on the aims and objectives of the economic strategy.

Issues arising from the discussion:-

- The Moray Council Finance Department and Business Gateway are developing a workshop to inform smaller local businesses of how to work in collaboration in order to work with the public procurement process. Business Gateway and Enterprise Europe can also help with advice.
- The work of Elgin BID was commended and there was recognition that this was in large part due to the work carried out on the ground by Jacqui Taylor who keeps daily contact with the local businesses. Another measure of its success will be whether local businesses vote to renew the Elgin BID contract which is due for renewal in November 2015.

6. Communications Strategy Update

1. LG presented the draft Communications Strategy. The main focus is to 'involve not tell' i.e. to encourage involvement in the implementation of the strategy from a range of groups including the Community Planning Partners, the business community, and the community at large. An objective of the plan is to facilitate a shared understanding and vision, so that all partners and stakeholders can be ambassadors for Moray. The plan identifies that resource needs to be agreed to provide this facility. This could be in the form of a specific contract or post to support all those working across the partnership.

Lesley was thanked for her input to the strategy. Initial feedback on the draft was positive. Implementing the strategy could involve demonstrating/articulating the 'quality of life' in Moray. For example, this may take the form of a promotional DVD that would promote the Moray Brand or the development of a means by which iconic places can be promoted. There may be an opportunity for partnership working in the creative industry to work on this aspect of the communication strategy.

2. LG outlined the 'report card' of activities carried out by the Moray Economic Partnership over the past 18 months. It was decided that this become an annual report and that this first annual report be forwarded to John Swinney as evidence of the commitment and work of the Moray Economic Partnership. It was agreed to keep the branding on the annual report as it is. Feedback was provided on the document, with some small amendments to be carried out.

ACTIONS:-

- Add the function of "Communications Manager" to the Organisational Structure for implementation of the Economic Strategy.

- Identify existing resources within the Community Planning Partnership that may be able to provide the function of a communications officer for the Moray Economic Partnership.
- Investigate the viability of funding and recruiting a specific communications officer for the Moray Economic Partnership.
- To present the draft Communication Strategy, Annual Report and Governance Structure to the Community Planning Board.
- The Chair to explore with Roddy Burns how to present the annual report to John Swinney i.e. in hard copy, or in person.

7. **Co-operation with ASCEF next steps**

There is potential to collaborate in relation to transport issues.

ACTION:- GS will write to ASCEF.

8. **Hot topics**

1. **Moray Economic Strategy**

This was approved at the Community Planning Board on 27 September. GS forwarded an updated organisational structure, along with roles and responsibilities, to members of the Moray Economic Partnership. The strategy will be formally launched at the Conference of the Highlands and Islands on 29 October. It will be signed by the Chief Executive Roddy Burns along with FM, JR and possibly one other – to be decided.

ACTION:- GS to submit a report to Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee outlining the draft Communications Strategy.

2. **Business Forum Update**

GM thanked JR for his work with local businesses, encouraging them to be part of the Business Forum. Names are still required for the role of business advocate for each programme in addition to deputies for the forum. GM indicated there might be more than one business advocate for each programme. JR stated that the role of the business advocate will develop over time. It was also acknowledged that there is a need for succession planning and that there may be an opportunity for including the next generation of business people.

ACTION:- The Chair to send out invitations to the forum participants with the objective of populating the business advocate role for the organisational structure prior to the launch of the Moray Economic Strategy on 29 October.

3. **Budget Setting**

This is at an early stage, with organisations beginning to consider their budgets for 2013/14. Discussion is now required in order to identify possibilities for aligning budgets for cross-cutting projects e.g. 5 major partners have employability as a priority which creates an opportunity for partnership working.

ACTION:- Identify project priorities in order to consider potential for aligning budgets.

9. AOB

- GS advised the meeting that a joint bid by the Moray Economic Partnership and Moray Employability Group for Scottish Government funding had been successful. £25,000 has been secured to investigate with employability agencies the potential to develop a 'one stop shop'; a temp agency to place job seekers further from the labour market.
- Business Gateway in Moray continues to outperform Business Gateway in the Highlands with higher levels of business confidence. This confidence may be due in part to the prominence of good news media that has been common in Moray over the last 12 to 18 months, and the performance due to the excellent staff at Moray Business Gateway. The Chair formally acknowledged the work carried out by Craig Robertson and the Business Gateway team. DO further advised that the number of business start ups and pipelines provides evidence of the performance of the Business Gateway.
- The Scottish Government has provided a seed fund of £5m for the first phase of Community Broadband Scotland. CNPA has submitted a bid for a pilot project for the Tomintoul/Glenlivet community. JR commented that this is a symbolic action and demonstrates progress in terms of including outlying areas in economic development projects.
- The Park House Business Centre, Elgin, has agreed that the Moray Economic Partnership can use their meeting room free of charge.
- MM advised the meeting that the Moray Chamber of Commerce is hosting the annual business summit "Ambitions for 2013" at the Horizon Centre, Forres, on 23rd November.

ACTION:- It was agreed that a 30/40 minute slot be made available at this event for the Moray Economic Partnership to promote itself and outline how the Business Forum and Programme Groups are intended to work. The format this will take will be discussed at the forthcoming leadership cohort meeting (9th November 2012).

- The Chair thanked all involved for the progress to date.

10. Future Meetings

Thursday 15th November, 9.30am: Johnstons, Elgin.

Friday 11th January, 9.30am: Park House Business Centre, Elgin.