

# **SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL SPACEPLANE OPERATIONS IN THE UK**

## **Response by the Moray Economic Partnership to the Department for Transportation (DfT) consultation on criteria to determine the location of a UK**

On behalf of the public and private partners in Moray which the Moray Economic Partnership (MEP) represents, we are delighted to have the opportunity to provide a response to the DfT's Consultation on criteria to determine the location of a UK spaceport following the recent CAA Review of spaceplane operations.

Within Moray there are two of the potential spaceport locations, both with long historic links to military aviation, Kinloss Barracks and RAF Lossiemouth. It comes as no surprise to us that both these locations have been shortlisted as potentially viable locations for a Spaceport as the very reasons they were established as RAF bases in the 1940's are equally relevant to the choice for a Spaceport location, i.e. good weather conditions, a safe location, availability of development land etc. It should be recalled that RAF Lossiemouth was previously identified in the UK Government Green Paper, "A Plan for Growth – 2011", as having "the location, facilities and infrastructure for space tourism flights and the potential to become the European centre for space tourism". The Region has both developed and evolved since then.

Our detailed response to the specific consultation questions has been informed by consultation with a range of public and private partners, a thorough review and analysis of the criteria and a genuine partnership approach to delivery. Moray has a track record of joined up partnership working, most recently in the RAF Taskforce established in 2010, which has subsequently developed into the MEP. The MEP partners are continuing to deliver hundreds of new jobs, in a diverse and sustainable economy, and economic development is the number one priority of the Moray Community Planning Partnership.

We believe that the criteria used to identify the current 8 short listed sites are valid and appropriate. Whilst recognising that the most immediate short term requirement is to provide a location for the successful launch of spaceplanes by 2018, we would recommend that a holistic long term view is taken of the opportunities, including satellite launches. Whichever site is ultimately selected there will be significant infrastructure development required, and a location which can be permanent and long term is desirable. Spaceplane development is experimental at present, and we recognise that this is the start of the development of a new industry for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Any site will need to meet the needs not just of 2018, but also of the coming decades. Safety issues have been quite rightly front and centre of initial location selection, and these will remain of paramount importance. However we also strongly recommend that consideration is given to the longer term economic development opportunities. These opportunities need to reflect the physical infrastructure required as well as the

requirements of end users to set up an operating base, and also effective operating conditions. This should not be restricted to the footprint of the Spaceport itself, as we believe that only by developing a campus approach both within and outside the boundary of a Spaceport can this be achieved.

As an example of this in the short term, the high end tourist attracted by the Spaceplanes will require a truly excellent tourist offering, as previously recognised, and we believe that Moray offers much of this, for example as the global home for Malt Whisky production and facilitated by the world's only Malt Whisky Trail.

### **Moray - The Best Location**

“We believe that Moray offers the best location for a Spaceport for a variety of reasons, technically, meteorologically, economically, but above all in terms of safety.”

The MEP position

#### **Safety**

The ultimate concern for a spaceplane operation will be the safety of the general public, and the choice of key criteria such as a coastal location and an area of low population density reflect this. In this respect we believe that Moray has a unique proposition compared to other shortlisted locations. Kinloss and Lossiemouth have been active RAF bases for the majority of the last 70 years, and have operated as mutual emergency landing sites. Whether Kinloss Barracks or RAF Lossiemouth is ultimately chosen, the other can continue to be the emergency landing site, and with the distance between them being c10 miles; we believe this adds both redundancy and resilience to the proposition, combined with operational lifeboats and helicopter bases in the immediate vicinity.

Safe operations are dependent upon good weather conditions, and Kinloss and Lossiemouth both benefit from high levels of flying days p.a., the very reason the RAF chose to base itself here. Weather conditions are vital, but equally so is the availability of uncluttered airspace. With a Military Air Traffic Zone (MATZ), in the area, and uncongested airspace due to relatively low commercial air traffic levels, the Moray area has much to offer in this area

#### **Infrastructure**

Kinloss Barracks and RAF Lossiemouth are both active military bases, and as such have many buildings and infrastructure which would be suitable for spaceport operations. RAF Lossiemouth is currently the UK's Northern Quick Reaction Alert ready airbase and enjoys in the region of 60 movements a day – a busy, functioning and safe operational flying unit. Kinloss Barracks acts as a Relief Landing airfield for RAF Lossiemouth and enjoys all the trimmings of an active airfield including air traffic and fire support. In particular Kinloss has extensive and largely underutilised technical accommodation, hard standing, hangerage and aviation related facilities (having moved from a land intensive RAF base), to an Army base in recent years. Ultimately we believe

that any spaceport location will need to expand beyond its current footprint, and again Kinloss in particular has ample land available which could be developed as required over the coming decades

### **Economic Development Opportunities and Experience**

The ability of an area to respond quickly to both opportunities and threats is vital to an economy, and Moray has shown itself capable in this field in recent years. Moray is home to a variety of high tech businesses, operating across diverse sectors which will support Spaceport operations. This includes businesses operating in defence, electronics, engineering, life sciences and digital health. Many of these businesses are inward investors attracted by the opportunities Moray offers, including a highly skilled technical workforce, complementary businesses and a high quality of life. The area is also open to and aware of the opportunities of diversification and is a part of Scotland which attracts global employees, with one of the highest proportions of the populations of residents who were born outside Scotland. Moray has a track record as a location of choice for business and residents, and when people come here, we find they invariably stay.

### **A Campus approach**

Moray believes that the development of a long term spaceport operation in the region will deliver significant economic benefit locally, regionally and nationally. It is however vital that a joined up approach is developed. In Moray we already have the corporate and executive infrastructure in place to develop this Campus approach through the Moray Economic Partnership and our ongoing relationships with key partners, agencies and importantly the local community. The importance of the buy in of the local community cannot be overestimated and Moray has shown that it can work collaboratively from the bottom up when needed, and the campaign to safeguard the military bases which ultimately succeeded in the retention of RAF Lossiemouth and the establishment of Kinloss Barracks is the perfect example of this. None of this could have been achieved without the collaboration of partners such as Moray Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, the University of the Highlands & Islands, the Military and the local community. We know how to work together in Moray. And we clearly welcome the opportunity to work with new partners and organisations.

This partnership and campus approach is ultimately what will be required to deliver a long term world leading opportunity such as a Spaceport. Working collaboratively we believe we can bring great benefit to the region and we believe we have many of the building blocks in place such as:

- A developed growth strategy for the region as exemplified in Highlands and Islands Operating Plan
- Strong links at a local, regional and national level
- Developing a space sector in collaboration with existing businesses and sectors,

- Track record of attracting inward investment to the area, e.g. Atos, Capita, Accunostics
- The ability to link businesses and academics together in a cluster approach
- Unique access to a highly skilled aviation related technical skill pool
- Proven track record of community engagement
- The ability to link space with other growth sectors which are already choosing to locate in the area, such as life sciences and renewable energy
- The home of Malt Whisky , an iconic tourism opportunity for Scotland and the UK

## **Summary**

In summary, Moray recognises the fantastic opportunity a spaceport development could bring to the region. We have the demonstrable track record on delivering new enterprise and high-tech business. Moray has the already acknowledged ability to support space tourism today; we understand the enormity of the task in creating a space port but genuinely believe have the experience, knowledge, skills and infrastructure to be the ideal location and serious contender. We care about people, we care about the environment, we embrace change, and we would be delighted to meet with appropriate UK Government departments to discuss our response in more detail, and look forward to working together to maximise the very evident economic opportunity for the UK.