

Moray Economic Strategy – Implementation Programme Status Update September to December 2013

Overall

- A media centre “newsroom” has been purchased by members of the partnership to provide information about implementation of the Moray Economic Strategy. It will identify Moray as a place to live work and invest. The newsroom is presently being built for population with information; partners will have the ability to put information on the newsroom about themselves and their activities. The newsroom should be ready to launch in the New Year. The contract will end July 2015.
- Platform PR has been awarded an 18 month contract to provide media services (engagement and communications) to the partnership including media releases. In this period a provisional news calendar has been drawn up for 2014 and features have been sent to media outlets about business start ups and the partnership structure. A regular feature in the Northern Scot is planned. The contract is from October 2013 to March 2015.
- On December 2 the partnership facilitated an informal business engagement between business men accompanying the Bolshoi Theatre and Ballet on a visit to Scotland. The engagement presented the opportunity for local business to form trade links. The visitors were offering opportunities to trade with Georgia, Belarus, Russia and the countries South of the Caucasus with a particular interest in importing food and drink (Whisky, Preserves, Seafood) also clothing and interested generally in importing high quality merchandise. A follow up meeting with Scottish Development International will be arranged to help take these relationships forward.
- On December 3 the partnership leadership cohort reviewed their current terms of reference, with a view to clarifying areas of responsibility and developing key performance indicators to be used by the partnership. The communications manager presented information to the partners to identify what makes attractive news for the media.
- Options to provide economic research intelligence including data collection and analysis are being investigated. Data collection and analysis is required to assess and provide evidence of the success of partner activities against desired outcomes.

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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. A business plan

is being developed now, with consultancy support jointly funded by HIE and Moray Chamber of Commerce, which will identify funding required, currently estimated at being from £150K to £230K over 3 years.

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 Culture and Tourism and Development Groups are working jointly towards establishing interest in North Port site identified in Elgin City for the Future.

Project: Visitor Orientation

- The C&T Group and the Skills Group have met with People 1st to learn about the World Host Destination Programme which provides customer care training and accreditation. There is great potential to increase tourism business through this medium, and the groups are now engaging with Associated Schools Groups (ASGs) area representatives with a view to developing a county-wide scheme leading to Moray being a World Host Destination. A steering group with members from across Moray has been formed. Moray Council Education Department is represented on the steering group by Jim Morris.
- A series of pilot World Host training days is being planned. Aimed at businesses in each ASG area, this will assist the planning of the roll-out of World Host training in Moray.
- The first training-for-trainers course for licensed World Host training providers will be held in January 2014. It will be advertised to all registered training providers, and participants from Moray College UHI will attend.
- Forres Area Community Trust is already planning training for its businesses.
- The Malt Whisky Trail is a significant part of Moray's tourism offer, and HIE is working with MWT and 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.

Project: New Arts School/Centre

- The C&T Group held a consultative meeting in Elgin on 30th July with representatives of local businesses involved with art and cultural activity. Moray Council staff, Creative Scotland, tsiMORAY and Richard Lochhead MSP also attended. The need for a large facility together with more local centres was strongly supported.
- Meetings have been held with National Trust for Scotland (NTS) over future development at Brodie Castle.

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 Skills and Training group has been meeting monthly since September. 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. Much of the new actions have been added to take into account the recommendations of the Moray Employability Strategy.
- The group have been working with the Employability Action Group to establish protocols for a structure between the 2 groups. Terms of Reference have been discussed and there will be a joint meeting between the 2 groups in January to discuss.
- The group have been working with the Tourism and Culture group in relation to the roll out of World Host in Moray. The first train the trainer sessions are scheduled to take place week of the 21st January. There is a requirement for more volunteers from partners to take up this opportunity. Press release has been issued by Platform PR.
- The Education into Business events which took place in September was very useful and a representative from Education attended a meeting of the Skills and Training group to support improved links between education and business.
- The group are planning to hold an event late January/early February to bring together all the business networks. It was agreed that as the remit of the group was so wide it would be more advantageous to establish business skills needs through contact with these groups which will include Moray Chamber, Federation of Small Business, Elgin BID, Business Gateway etc.

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Development

- Buckie Harbour ship yard is to be marketed in January to determine the levels of interest developing the yard for ship building or alternative activities which support the economic growth of the harbour and surrounding areas.
- There appears to be renewed interest from offshore wind O&M companies in

using Buckie harbour as a base to support offshore wind development.

- On August 13 the Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme [was launched](#) The £3.3million scheme has secured funding from Historic Scotland, Moray Council, City of Elgin Business Improvement District (BID) and the Elgin Fund to carry out essential repairs and improvements to the city centre over the next five years. The Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) will provide grants to help business and property owners/occupiers with the cost of external repairs for identified priority buildings and closes, other historic buildings in need of repair and for shop front improvements. Several 'expressions of interest' in the grant scheme have been received and to date, three shop front applications have been approved and another three applications are expected to be submitted for consideration in February. Two stonemasonry apprentices have been employed and will be placed with local companies in the New Year, in addition to receiving training at the Historic Scotland Training Unit at Elgin Cathedral. Contractor training is also being developed in line with demand to ensure that the local skills base is equipped for the specialist nature of the conservation work that the scheme will require.
- A report on the initial scoping and financial appraisal for Lossie Green will be submitted to the Economic Development and Infrastructure committee in January 2014 for consideration.
- The potential of using at site at Elgin High School for allotments is being taken forward with the Elgin Allotments Association.
- Planning Permission Granted for an extension to the St Giles Shopping Centre, Elgin. [4,500 square metres of retail floor space](#)

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Transportation

- **Lifting the Spirit pilot project** began with the first train of whisky product leaving Elgin on 4 September 2013 and it has operated 2 trains most weeks for 2 months. Whilst the pilot has now finished, interest in the use of rail freight to and from the Elgin Yard has been generated with some Moray companies in the food sector and also major food retailers. It is hoped that the pilot will lead to private sector contracts being established in the future with rail operators for freight trains to operate out of Elgin.
- **Developments at Buckie Harbour** – The study by Highlands and Islands Enterprise of opportunities at Buckie harbour, including those involving renewable energy, has been completed. The Council has approved plans to refurbish the old net store south of Commercial Road and create new industrial units, hopefully for harbour-related business. Other Council-owned land is on short-term lease to Forsyths but can be used to accommodate renewables Operations & Maintenance (O&M) activities if that is attracted to Buckie.

- **Dualling of the A96:** Transport Scotland provided a presentation to the Council's Economic Development & Infrastructure Services Committee on 3 September 2013 on the process for dualling the A96, and 4 public exhibitions have been held in Moray to outline the engineering and evaluation work ahead. Transport Scotland and their consultants will continue to hold meetings with officers from Local Roads Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships at 6 monthly intervals to report on progress. The next of these will be in April 2014.
- **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. The work can be carried out by the Council's framework consultants Jacobs, and a meeting with Transport Scotland to determine the scope of the study will take place in January 2014.
- **Lossie Green, Elgin:** It is anticipated that preliminary work will start soon on investigation of the development proposals for Lossie Green in Elgin. The progress of 3 Transportation theme projects are linked to this proposal. These are the relocation of the Elgin Bus Station, the relocation of the Elgin Lorry Park 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 is preparing 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. It would be advantageous if a letter of support from the Partnership was incorporated into the bid document.

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Inward Investment and Business Growth

- Inward Investment propositions: Review of previous activity has been carried out by Mickledore on behalf of HIE. There have been a number of successes over the past two years, Atos, Jerky Group and EFC, with a number of other enquiries in the pipeline. The report suggests some improvements that could be made in dealing with very early stage enquiries, but notes that there is a very good record in securing strong leads. Work is progressing on revising and strengthening propositions in the Oil and Gas and Digital Health sectors.
- Keith: the community of Keith have developed strong branding for the town, and have a website promoting the town and what it has to offer. They are now in discussion with HIE and other public sector stakeholders to look at

how best to attract investment to the town.

- Barmuckity (Elgin) Business Park: Loan funding of £2.7m has been approved by HIE with work expected to start on site during the last quarter of the year.
- Identification of Expansion Land: Work continues with the Enterprise Forres masterplan, Buckie Harbour and the Local Plan consultation.
- Forres Enterprise Park: Unit 11 is now almost complete and will be handed over to the tenant in the next month. Unit 10 is completed and is now being actively marketed.
- 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.

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