

Moray Business Resilience Meeting
Thursday 13 August 2020 (Skype call)

Action Points

Attendees:

David Groundwater - FSB
Gemma Cruickshank – Elgin BID
Graham Leadbitter – Moray Council
Laurie Piper – Moray Speyside Tourism
Jan Bruce – SDS
Jane Cumming – SCDI
Jim Grant – Moray Council
Laurie Piper – Moray Speyside Tourism
Sarah Medcraf – Moray Chamber of Commerce
Scott McKnockiter – HIE
Stephen Sheridan – SDS
Stuart Black - HIE

Apologies:

Craig Robertson – Business Gateway
Donna Harper - MBWC
Douglas Ross - MP
Fiona Robb - HIE
Fraser Grieve – SWA
Jane Munro - DWP
Michael O'Donnell – Moray Council
Richard Lochhead - MSP

1. Stuart Black opened meeting
2. Public Sector Update
 - a. Council led webinars have been running this week in conjunction with joint community councils and Moray Chamber of Commerce. Good discussions with local businesses to identify their needs going forwards for the next year to be incorporated into the action plan for economic recovery
 - b. Increasing interest in start-ups in the region
 - c. Digital Boost fund of £1.5M for Business Gateway to help businesses develop their online presence and e-commerce platforms. The scheme may be enhanced through the highlands and islands with HIE funds
 - d. Details of the Hotels fund will be launched on the findbusinesssupport.co.uk website imminently. HIE hoping to be able to offer specialist support and access locally for those mid-sized businesses who missed out on previous funding

- e. Significant increase in calls to central SDS helpline in the past two weeks. Staff triaging to local centres and partners
- f. SDS have extended the exams helpline in light of recent exam results. Students will now be able to access support until the end of August (possibly longer)
- g. Potential Transition Training fund to be released cross sector but need to get an idea what industries/sectors will have a growing importance to direct the training. Input from employers needed to identify what training is required
- h. Free parking in Elgin has been extended to end of October but this is a significant source of income for the council to be able to provide other essential services. Residents and local businesses asked to park further afield so that parking spaces to be freed up for visitors and shoppers
- i. Preparations being made to re-open public toilets for rest of this year and into 2021 with some on a seasonal basis
- j. UK Govt announced investment in the Aviation Academy project as part of the Growth Deal. Heads of Terms not signed yet but lots of work going on in the background with projects that can be signed off as soon agreed
- k. Moray Council have released additional resources to deal with the increase of public litter in the town centres and coastal areas

3. Private Sector Update

- a. Noted that bigger companies will be shedding 60-100 jobs but must be mindful of many SMEs losing 1 or 2 employees across all sectors that could have just as big an impact
- b. Digital sector doing well although not many companies based within Moray. Jobs supporting the MoD such as construction and engineering are also doing well but not known how much longer they will be required. Other industries reporting taking on employees eg. food and drink
- c. Check and Protect app now launched via Moray Chamber of Commerce and Moray Speyside Tourism with good press and take up locally. Free for businesses to join
- d. Good news that export tariffs have been removed from shortbread and not extended to blended whisky and gin although cashmere and malt whisky are still affected
- e. Moray Chamber seeing an increase in membership uptakes
- f. Questions have been coming in for the round table webinar with Richard Lochhead
- g. Tourism Levy invoices have now been sent out but it is not possible to provide discounts
- h. Round table event between hospitality industry and Douglas Ross went well. Douglas to pursue any issues raised
- i. Concerns that the Eat Out to Help Out scheme may have been launched too early – would be more beneficial later in the year. People staying in self-catering not being able to find anywhere to eat out. Hoping this does not create bad publicity
- j. Moray Speyside Tourism involved with helping businesses market themselves from the ground up and not relying on sole use of travel agents. Many hotels in Elgin have been relying on local contractor trade
- k. Self-catering businesses and caravan sites all fully booked but hotels/B&Bs reporting varying levels of occupancy 20-60%
- l. Concerns when the furlough scheme will finish if trade has not picked up by then and the volume of redundancies expected to grow

- m. VAT abatement an ongoing issue with when this ends
 - n. Challenges experienced in Aberdeenshire used as a precedence for other areas. There was a delay in making judgements as to the time exposed and probability of contact etc, but now Test and Protect system is mandatory, more people can be traced quicker
 - o. Spaces available on the Growbiz courses showing businesses how to trade online
 - p. Plans to improve Elgin town centre with the provision of seating and hand sanitisers to be reconsidered. HIE and Elgin BID funding to be discussed with Moray Council
4. AOB
- a. Members to contribute to promoting events throughout Moray
 - b. Jan from SDS announced she will be moving to another post with SDS but will be able to introduce her replacement at the next meeting. Jan was thanked for her contribution

Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 20th August 2.00pm – 3.00pm