

Moray Business Resilience Meeting

Thursday 16 April 2020 (Skype call)

Action Points

Attendees:

Cllr Graham Leadbitter – Moray Council
Jim Grant – Moray Council
Michael O'Donnell – Moray Council
Douglas Ross - MP
Sarah Medcraf – Moray Chamber of Commerce
Clare Lock – MBWC
Gregory Spenser – FSB on behalf of David Groundwater
Stuart Black - HIE
Fiona Robb - HIE
Scott McKnockiter - HIE
Craig Robertson – Business Gateway
Gill Neill – Elgin BID
Laurie Piper – Moray Speyside Tourism
Richard Lochhead - MSP
Jane Cumming – SCDI
Fraser Grieve – SWA
Stephen Sheridan - SDS

Apologies:

David Groundwater - FSB

1. Stuart Black opened meeting and thanked everyone for their time, round table introductions followed
2. Actions from previous meeting.
 - a. 919 applications received of which 437 have now been approved and processed amounting to £4.7M although frustration that some businesses still waiting for grants and have not received acknowledgement of when payments will be made
 - b. Bulk applications are being processed in a timely manner however there is a delay on incomplete or more complex bespoke applications. Is there anything more that can be done to highlight what documentation is required from applicants to speed up the process?
3. Local Business Updates
 - a. Moray Chamber webinar gratefully received. All Scottish Chambers have been in contact and have issues with a common theme.

- b. Talks around a recovery process, especially for tourism and supporting those businesses as we come out of lockdown.
 - c. Some organisations are starting to get back to businesses observing safe working practises. It is a balancing act to keep safe and work as normal. Lack of production having effect on supply chain and future orders need to be met. More questions on whether a business can and should open. Guidance is not clear and can viewed in different ways- Clarification sought from SG
 - d. De minimis applies however a new COVID-19 scheme up to £800k now exists which means that more SMEs can access assistance. More publicity still required for SMEs to access available loans
 - e. Clarity required on the new funding schemes recently announced by SG ie. would the leisure industry be eligible?
 - f. News from RGU that upskilling has been positive and people are investing more in themselves to gain additional skills
 - g. Businesses are keen to know what to expect from the HMRC portal when it opens on 20th April for furlough applications
 - h. Interest to know what the future of business will look like and how to make it better eg new technology
 - i. Is there an opportunity for resilience funding on a local level from larger companies not affected by lockdown supporting smaller local businesses eg community benefit from wind energy companies
 - j. Concerns around director positions in companies
 - k. FSB have raised with SG concerns about the different interpretations locally about grant aid and asked about any formal process
 - l. Interesting to see how the multiple property issue (75% for additional properties) will be dealt with and whether this will be a separate application, integrated with existing and what happened with those who have already applied in this bracket and had knock back
 - m. CBILS - still not hearing much success on this front. FSB providing a free webinar on Friday for anyone who wants to question the Chief Commercial Officer of the British Business Bank, Chief Executive of UK Finance and others. Details sent out separately
 - n. SDS have adapted to 1:1 support online and by phone. Additional support for apprentices facing redundancy/furlough and liaising with provider network. New initiatives to identify skills gaps and announced myworldofwork.co.uk site to advertise immediate vacancies. PACE operating a normal programme although current demand is low. Hotline to be launched on 27th April geared towards helping young people
4. Public Sector Update
- a. £600M extra funding has been announced for public services in Scotland
 - b. UK Govt have extended the date for employee furlough date from 28th Feb. This has been extended to those who were employed at 19th March. This now means an additional 200,000 employees will qualify as a result
 - c. £100K Crown Estate Funding has already been committed by Moray Council. More funds will be available in the autumn
 - d. New £100M funding announced by SG yesterday to be distributed between LA and enterprise agencies. Further details of eligibility to follow but it aims to cover gaps in existing support. System ready to receive applications by 5th May

- e. Employers who have applied for employee retention scheme to ensure they have access to the online PAYE system or to register for a Government Gateway account to prevent any further delays. FSB to announce on their newsletter and social media. Details of registration circulated to all members under separate email

5. AOB

- a. A project is being developed around the Moray food and drink industry to establish an E-commerce online directory and support businesses to get online. HIE investigating feasibility with Moray College UHI, Moray Chamber and local businesses
- b. Supporting Communities Fund applications being processed. SCVO have announced Wellbeing Fund. Update on figures at next meeting
- c. Agreed to share outcomes of meetings more widely via existing networks and publishing action notes online
- d. Further meetings to continue Mondays and Thursdays until further notice

Date and time of next meeting

Monday 20th April 2.00pm – 3.00pm