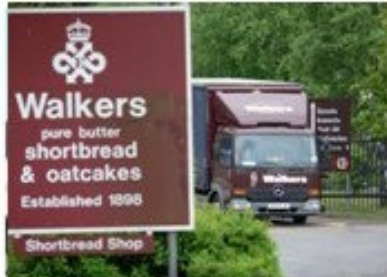


The Moray Council

Areas for Transport Investment in Moray Executive Summary



February 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the closure of RAF Kinloss confirmed and the future of RAF Lossiemouth uncertain, it is important that measures are put in place to assist the maintenance and growth of the economy in Moray. Improvements to transport would play a key role by improving access for employers and improving links to/from Moray for various types of trip including travel to work, the movement of goods and tourist trips.

The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) was published prior to the significant downturn in the national economy with associated reductions in defence spending that will have a significant impact on the economy of Moray. Transport Scotland has recognised in the STPR that there must be an allowance for refining and updating the interventions as progress towards the defined objectives are measured.

The STPR objectives for the Aberdeen to Inverness corridor focus on supporting development between Inverness and Nairn and also improving safety on the A96 and improving operation of both the road and rail network between the two cities. It is considered that the significant change to the economic situation in Moray post STPR may alter the priorities on the corridor, in that there is a need to support development and economic growth over a wider area.

Outwith the RAF bases, the other significant employers and economic generators in the area include:

- The Public Sector (mainly The Moray Council, Moray College/University of the Highlands and Islands and NHS);
- Numerous distilleries;
- Food manufacturing at Baxters and Walkers;
- Tourism; and
- Employment in and around the harbours, especially Buckie.

There are several opportunities for growing the economy in Moray including:

- The growth of existing industries;
- Growth in tourist related activities;
- Offshore renewables support; and
- The development of Business Parks.

Issues and constraints associated with transport and accessibility are often seen as barriers to investment and growth. As an example, journey times by train between Glasgow and London are less than those between Glasgow and Elgin.

Elgin is the largest town or city, and Moray the only local authority in Scotland, without a direct public transport link to Glasgow or Edinburgh. Travel to Moray by public transport requires a lengthy diversion and interchange in Inverness or Aberdeen.

The A96 and A95 Trunk Roads provide the main strategic road links to/from Moray.

The A96 provides links to the regional centres of Aberdeen and Inverness and passes through several population centres where delays are experienced due to conflict with local trips and pedestrian movements. Outwith the settlements, there are limited overtaking opportunities on the route resulting in increased journey times and often driver frustration.

The A95 provides an important strategic link for passenger and freight movement to/from Moray, providing a link between the area and the A9 (and destinations to the south) at Aviemore. The high HGV levels and poor road standards on parts of A95 result in reduced journey times and driver frustration.

On the rail network, journey times and frequency of service between Aberdeen and Inverness are poor. In addition, rail freight facilities at Elgin, Keith and Burghead are disused.

The rural nature of Moray means that many bus services require additional subsidy from the Local Authority to enable the services to operate. Loss of one or both of the air bases is likely to reduce the viability of some existing commercial services resulting in a requirement for additional funding or service withdrawal.

The Moray Council owns and operates several harbours within the area including the commercial port at Buckie. A dredger is also operated by the Council to maintain access to the harbours, which support several businesses in the area. The existing dredger is in need of urgent replacement to enable continuing use of the harbours.

In order to address identified issues, a single objective, to assess potential interventions, was set. This objective is:

To identify transport improvements to assist in the maintenance and growth of the economy in Moray.

This objective does not contradict the current objectives for the corridor in the STPR, rather it is considered that this objective compliments the desire to support and grow the economy in the area.

Several potential interventions that could benefit the existing economy of Moray and encourage growth have been identified. These interventions have been assessed, based on cost, deliverability and performance against the single key objective.

From this assessment, the interventions were categorised into tiers as detailed below:

- Tier 1 – Interventions with an estimated cost that is less than £5M, are deliverable and provide a major contribution towards assisting the maintenance and growth of the economy in Moray.
 - Provision of direct coach services between Moray and Glasgow/Edinburgh; and
 - Funding for a replacement dredger for Moray's Harbours, in particular, Buckie.
- Tier 2 – Interventions with an estimated cost less than £5M, are deliverable and provide a moderate contribution towards assisting the maintenance and growth of the economy of Moray.
 - Provision of funding to provide access to potential Business Parks in Moray;
 - Passenger Rail Phase 1&2; and
 - A95 Lackghie Scheme.
- Tier 3 – Interventions with a higher estimated cost and/or lower contribution towards assisting the maintenance and growth of the economy of Moray. These interventions may also have issues related to deliverability.

- A96 Elgin East;
 - Increased overtaking opportunities on the A96 (1);
 - Increased overtaking opportunities on the A96 (2);
 - A95 Gaich to Craggan Scheme; and
 - Passenger Rail Phase 3.
- Tier 4 – Interventions with negligible contribution towards assisting the maintenance and growth of the economy of Moray.
 - Inveramsay Bridge replacement

The closure of any of the RAF establishments in Moray will have a significant impact on the Moray economy. This report has identified a variety of transport interventions, for which The Moray Council is seeking funding from external sources to assist in the maintenance and growth of the Moray economy. The Moray Council is therefore presenting this report and its findings to The Scottish Government for its consideration.