

KEEP THE RAF IN MORAY

Bulletin 17

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Moray Businesses Make Plea to PM

Hundreds of Moray businesses, employing thousands of local people, have signed an open letter to Prime Minister David Cameron calling on the Government to support the economy as it faces uncertainty over the future of the RAF.

A copy of the letter will also be given to Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey when he visits Moray tomorrow (Thursday) reinforcing the message that the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury must work together to make joined up defence and economic decisions for the area.

Moray Task Force, which grew earlier this month to include a broader community membership, committed at its last meeting to creating the letter for the local business community.

Moray Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses have shared it with their members. It directly calls on the Prime Minister to "listen to local concerns and instead of doing immeasurable damage, work with us to help Moray move forward in strength and with confidence to maximise the assets which make this a special part of the country to work and live."

Calum MacPherson of Moray Task Force said: "Businesses of all shapes and sizes from across the area have joined together to create this letter. We have seen responses from a wide range of sectors; retail, tourism; financial and business services; transport and construction; publishing and education. Some employ one or two staff, others hundreds of people, but they all share the same passion about protecting the area where they live and work.

"As well as sending the open letter with all the names to the Prime Minister we will also be providing Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey with a copy. We are delighted he is meeting with the Task Force and that we will have an opportunity to again highlight the disproportionate social and economic impact on Moray a double closure would have as compared to anywhere else in the UK."

One in five jobs is supported by the RAF in Moray. The bases between them provide 5,700 service and civilian jobs, and bring £158 million of wages to the region each year.

Job and skills hub for Moray base

A work and skills centre aimed at helping those affected by redundancies at RAF Kinloss is to be set up at the base site by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) on behalf of the Moray Taskforce.

The centre, is backed by a partnership of SDS, the Highland Employer Coalition, Jobcentre Plus, the Kinloss Skills Partnership and Career Transition Partnership.

Operated by employment and careers professionals, the work and skills club will be developed to help both military and civilian personnel who are likely to lose their jobs when the base closes. It will offer people practical support to get into employment or training.

Skills Development Scotland's area manager for Moray, Anthony Standing, explained: "We are working with our partners to ensure the hub will be able to provide premises, equipment, coaching support and guidance to help people make the transition from base-dependent employment into alternative careers or further training. The aim is to ensure help is available to everyone affected at RAF Kinloss.

"It will launch on January 31. In the first instance the club will be taking registrations, building relationships and gathering views from its prospective users and supporting agencies. The services that come on stream will evolve and develop based on the needs of service users over the coming months.



Coming Up in Moray

Friday 28th January - The next meeting of the Moray Task Force is in Forres

Friday 28th January - Moray Chamber of Commerce Event. **Hot topic at Baxters with Angus Robertson MP - responding to change** - In the US where decisions are taken to close or realign military bases then an agency of the US Department of Defence steps in and assists the local community. The Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) has a long standing record in managing economic transition in defence dependent areas. Angus Robertson will discuss this topic and look at ways the business community can look to manage any transition required when we know the future of both our air bases. 3pm Start – Members £8.00/Friends £10.00

Wednesday 16th February - visit by Jim Mather MSP, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism

Moray Chamber of Commerce facilitated a meeting in January with Jim Mather MSP giving local businesses the opportunity to discuss issues that affected them. At this session he will assist in devising a strategy to respond to our concerns and ideas generated at the original meeting.



Moray is and will remain an amazing place to live and work, but we need the community and businesses to make their voices heard.

Moray Tourism

Moray is in the spotlight this weekend as part of the My Scotland marketing campaign currently being run by VisitScotland. The campaign is specifically targeting Scots to holiday at home and capitalises on the popularity of the staycation trend.

With around 40 per cent of trips in Scotland taken by those who live here, the campaign encourages residents to leave their passports at home and discover some of the many unique delights their own country has to offer.

Expected to reach more than three million people across the country, the My Scotland campaign includes major media partnerships with the Daily Record, online advertising and a series of outstanding special offers which can be viewed from Friday at:

www.visitscotland.com/soclosetohome

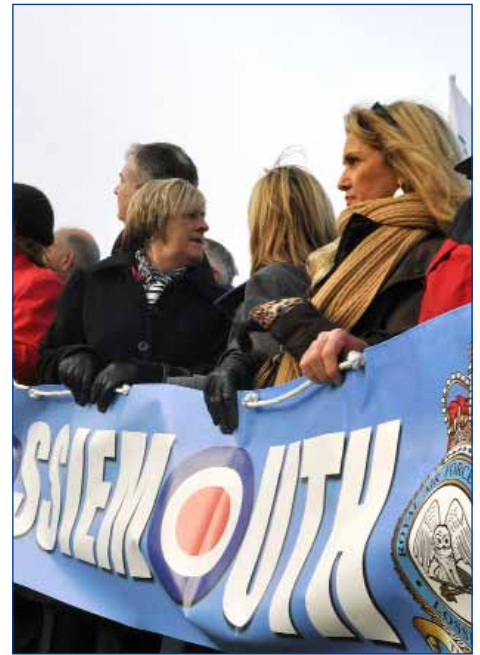
VisitScotland has already received several promotional deals from Moray businesses to be featured throughout the campaign this week, which shines a spotlight on the region's wealth of things to see and do and showcases the quality and value on offer. The campaign has been focusing on a different part of the country every week since its inception in June 2010, and will run until March this year.

Marion Walker, of Moray Tourism Development: "Moray is a world class destination both for Scots and visitors from across the globe. Our rich heritage, breathtaking landscapes and iconic food and drink are just some of the many reasons visitors chose a short break in Moray.

"A large percentage of visitors to Moray are Scottish residents, and the staycation trend has been really beneficial to this region. The industry in Moray work to provide a high quality experience and build good relationships with customers to ensure Moray is well positioned as a must visit must return destination."

Jim Mather, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, said: "Moray is rich in heritage, has stunning landscapes and seascapes, produces delicious food and drink and offers fantastic opportunities for a variety of activities including walking, cycling and fishing. It makes perfect economic sense to promote this stunning part of Scotland as a great place to spend a 'staycation'.

VisitScotland's Regional Director, Scott Armstrong, said: "Tourism is an important and growing element of the Moray economy and working together it's our responsibility to sing our area's praises not just to the rest of the world, but to those living in this country. Both our Chief Executive and our Chairman have attended meetings in the area recently pledging to up the ante when it comes to promoting all that Moray has to offer visitors, particularly in light of the recent UK Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review. It's time for a renewed domestic push to help get tourism growth back on track and, working in partnership with the industry, we can achieve exactly that."



Help for Small Businesses in Moray

The Flexible Training Opportunities fund, delivered by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and supported by the European Social Fund gives businesses the opportunity to apply for up to £5,000 towards employee training costs.

The programme of funding aims to help small businesses become more resilient and boost productivity and success. The fund is offered to businesses in Moray with 150 employees or less. The application process is very straightforward but assistance is available. The process usually takes up to five working days from application to decision.

SDS will refund up to 50% for training courses up to a maximum of £5,000 per business. The training can be allocated to any number of employees up to a maximum of 10. For example, a business can opt to put 10 employees on courses with a value of £500 each, or alternatively, put one employee through 10 courses, with all variations in between.

Courses include industry recognised qualifications, workshops and masterclasses, and now management training, but does not include statutory training such as health and safety training.

For further information and to apply please contact Skills Development Scotland on 0800 783 6000.

Moray Task Force...

has come together to address the impact on Moray of the UK Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review, published in October 2010.

Made up of private business, the public sector and community groups, the task force is campaigning to keep the Tornados at RAF Lossiemouth and to support the businesses and communities affected by the cancellation of the Nimrod contract at RAF Kinloss.

