

STRATEGY

ISSUES

Context

- 1.1 Moray's role as a place in which to live, work, and play requires to be seen in a wider context. Scotland, the UK, and Europe all play an increasingly important role in the day to day workings of Moray.
- 1.2 Businesses, employees, the unemployed, residents, and tourists will all have different thoughts about the future priorities for development in Moray. However, any priorities must recognise that Moray is a predominantly rural area which must embrace progress even to maintain its existing standard of living.
- 1.3 Moray's employment structure still shows high concentrations in primary industries and related manufacturing such as fish and food production. In addition, there is a substantial MOD presence at the two RAF bases at Lossiemouth and Kinloss. An essential requirement will be to diversify the economic base of the area by providing a responsive planning framework.
- 1.4 Europe recognises Moray's uniqueness and the difficulties it faces by giving it special status. This recognises problems associated with its peripheral location and declining primary industries. The west of Moray is covered by Objective 1 status (and within that the Forres Travel to Work Area is a Government Development Area). The remainder of the Council area is covered by Objective 5(b). These funds offer assistance towards projects that promote the economic development of the area and reduce the effects of peripherality. There is a need to maximise the impact of such funds within Moray. However, the programme of diversification will be long term. It will be essential for the Council and the Government to argue the case for the extension of the programme (or similar) beyond the current end date of 1999.

Update

New structural fund programmes came in to force in January 2000. The Objective 1 status previously covering west Moray has been removed, and the area is now part of the Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme.

East Moray lies within the East of Scotland Objective 2 Programme, part having full Objective 2 status, the balance being transitional.

- 1.5 Moray's peripheral location in the UK and its rural character means that the movement of goods and people is a key factor for consideration. It will be essential both to improve existing transport infrastructure but also to take full advantage of new technologies to improve communications to and from rural areas.
- 1.6 The surrounding environment is a major asset for Moray, although it is sometimes seen as an inhibition. It helps to attract businesses, residents, and tourists. The natural resources embodied by international assets such as the Cairngorms and the high quality built environment provide a unique selling point for the area.

STRATEGY





Elgin: East End

- 1.7 Moray's settlement structure is based on a large number of towns and villages centred on the administrative, business and shopping centre at Elgin. Buckie, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth are the four next largest towns. The likely scale of future development is such that it should be able to be contained by expanding these and other communities. However, there will be a requirement to distribute the development in a manner that pays regard to economic (including demand), environmental and infrastructure thresholds.
- 1.8 As a rural area with a limited catchment population, Moray is under increasing pressure from the adjacent centres of Aberdeen and Inverness. It therefore needs to assert its future role. Competition is already severely impacting on Elgin's role as the main retail centre within Moray. It also makes it increasingly difficult to attract new industries and businesses into the area. If long term decline is to be avoided, positive action will be required to meet the challenges of the future.

Strategic Forecasts

- 1.9 In 1997 the Council produced strategic forecasts for the period up to 2011. The forecasts for population, employment and housing are shown in Figure 1. The forecasts for population and employment show a slight growth (3.1% and 5.1% respectively), whereas the housing forecasts are higher (11.2%) reflecting the increasing trend towards single adult households.
- 1.10 When adjusted to take account of stock change the housing requirement is as shown in Figure 2.

Sustainable Development

- 1.11 The Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), defined sustainable development as "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept was central to the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Government has endorsed its obligation under Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit to draw up a national strategy for sustainable development, presented to the United Nations at the end of 1993. The principles of sustainable development are to be translated into action on the ground through Local Agenda 21 sustainable development plans prepared by local authorities, and Moray is well advanced in this process.
- 1.12 The Moray Council embraces the overall concept and principles of sustainable development and the Structure and Local Plan will play their part in integrating it into the Development Plan.

Update

The Moray Council published a draft LA21 strategy and action plan - "Moray - A Sustainable Future" in January 2001.

Strategic Priorities

- 1.13 Because of its locational disadvantages Moray requires to promote economic development by targeting available financial resources, and this requires to be balanced with the needs of the population and the environment.
- 1.14 In taking forward the above there are a number of strategic choices. These are to:
- i) focus development upon existing settlements
 - ii) allow development of new settlements
 - iii) allow development outwith settlements
- 1.15 The first option is consistent with national guidance and with the concept of sustainability. It reinforces the function of existing settlements making cost effective use of public resources, has least impact on the environment and helps to sustain public transport, cycling and walking in the promotion of energy efficiency.
- 1.16 Focusing of development on existing settlements also allows strategic choice related to the existing settlement structure. Currently, Elgin is the main commercial and administrative centre within Moray, with second tier functions being provided by the towns of Forres, Buckie, Keith and Lossiemouth. Although it would be possible to construct policies to begin to change this structure, such an approach is likely to be environmentally unsustainable and is unlikely to divert development to areas of weak demand. Moreover, artificial distortions of land and property values are likely to weaken the competitive advantage of the area's economy.
- 1.17 The potential to bring forward new settlements within Moray is unlikely to be justified in terms of likely levels of demand. Such development would be unlikely to be able to provide necessary facilities and infrastructure. In addition, it would impact upon the general environment. Therefore, this option to identify new settlements is not considered to be realistic.
- 1.18 In general, the option to allow development outwith settlements is inherently inefficient in terms of service provision, impact on the environment and in the use of transport energy. However, within the remote rural areas of Moray there is limited commuter pressure. Here, there is a case to provide a more lenient policy framework in order to encourage development that may help to support current levels of service provision and sustain rural communities.
- 1.19 Therefore the preferred option is to build upon the existing settlement structure taking likely levels of demand into account.



Whitemire Village Conservation Area

AIMS

1.20 The analysis of issues in the preceding section sets the context for the Plan's aims and overall strategy.

The aims are as follows:

Moray Structure Plan Aims

The Moray Structure Plan aims to:

- i) promote economic growth and development
- ii) spread the benefits of economic growth across the community
- iii) maintain and improve the natural and built environment
- iv) underpin development by promoting sustainability.

STRATEGY

1.21 The aims can be translated into a single broad strategy that brings together the broad manner in which it will be implemented. It also sets the subsequent topic based policies, proposals and recommendations in a coherent and integrated context.

1.22 The central pillars of the strategy are to promote economic growth and to conserve the natural and built environment, and to promote overall sustainability. The associated requirements of this central strategy are to:

Provide adequate land for development focused upon the existing settlement pattern

1.23 The Strategy seeks to promote economic development and growth throughout the Region. This means bringing land forward for development. However, land is a finite resource and as such needs to be used efficiently. The release of land for development also needs to be managed to minimise any adverse impact on communities and the environment, and make effective use of resources.

1.24 The long term viability of communities is best secured by a strategy whereby future growth is settlement based. This achieves economies of scale in the provision and maintenance of infrastructure, and community services and facilities and enables efficient and effective use to be made of limited resources. It also minimises environmental impact by securing brownfield development in preference to greenfield development.

1.25 In seeking to strengthen communities, however, it is necessary to respect the individual character and identity of settlements. Good quality development can help minimise impact and even enhance the environment. Special protection is to be afforded to areas of significant conservation value but, equally, adequate provision of land for development generally will reduce pressure on vulnerable areas.

- 1.26 Where development pressures are greatest, mainly around settlements, restraint in the form of Countryside Around Towns will be required. This will help to ensure that development is directed into urban areas, and that, at the same time, coalescence and urban sprawl is minimised. Consequently, the focus for development will be the administrative and commercial centre at Elgin, supported by Buckie, Forres, Lossiemouth and Keith.

Secure and target resources to promote economic development and employment opportunities.

- 1.27 Moray is mainly rural, has concentrations in a limited number of industries, and contains areas where unemployment persists. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen and diversify the economy.
- 1.28 Economic growth and development may be best achieved by supporting traditional industries, attracting inward investment, promoting potential growth industries such as tourism, and encouraging the development of telecommunications, teleworking and homeworking. Indigenous industries generally need to improve their competitive position through diversification into new technology and by adding value to already high quality exports.
- 1.29 The planning system, therefore, needs to provide the framework for an adequate provision of employment land and floorspace in terms of quantity, quality and range of sites and premises. The continuing need for serviced land comes, however, at a time when local Government finance remains limited. The role of other agencies therefore needs to be fully recognised in bringing forward land for development.
- 1.30 The European Community, the Government, Development Agencies and the private sector are needed to assist with the provision of essential infrastructure, as an investment for the future. The area's advantages in terms of European Objective 1 and 5(b) designations and national Development Area status should therefore be built upon to secure economic prosperity.
- 1.31 The location of employment uses in relation to homes and transport networks will require careful consideration in order to ensure energy efficient development and efficient use of existing transport infrastructure.
- 1.32 The high quality environment in Moray provides further opportunities to develop tourism. This is especially so in remote areas of the Region where the income and employment potential is particularly needed. However, this will need to be achieved in a manner that conserves the resource base of the area.
- 1.33 In conclusion, the economic strategy can only be satisfied through partnerships that emphasise quality in the provision of sites and premises, products and services, technology, education, training and the environment. The main focus for activity will be on the main population centres which can meet anticipated demand and are able to supply the required workforce. The Objective 1 and Development Area status of the Forres area provides an important opportunity, particularly related to inward investment and 'clean' business development.



*Improvements to the Strathisla Distillery, Keith
by Acanthus Architects Douglas Forrest
for the Chivas and Glenlivet Group*



St. Giles, Elgin

Secure a modern transportation and communications network

- 1.34 It is essential for people, goods and services, and information to move easily. Businesses need good access to suppliers and markets, and people must have good access to jobs, shops and services and entertainment. The strategy therefore seeks to maximise accessibility whilst conserving resources and minimising impact on the environment.
- 1.35 Given Moray's peripheral location in the United Kingdom and Europe, external communications are vital to the Region's economy. Strategic road, rail and sea links to and from the area therefore, need to be safeguarded and improved. Trunk road links from Moray to Inverness and Aberdeen and to the south require to be upgraded, as do the rail links between Aberdeen and Inverness and to the south. Air (at both Inverness and Aberdeen) and sea (particularly for freight) services also need to be kept under review and improved where possible.
- 1.36 Internal communications are equally important. To improve accessibility and to promote sustainable forms of transport means to shift wherever practical from the private car to public transport, cycling and walking.
- 1.37 Measures to improve and encourage the use of public transport include subsidies to routes that would otherwise not be viable; improving the quality, marketing and information about routes. At the same time, some car usage will be discouraged through such measures as car parking policy, traffic calming, deterring private car commuting.

Protect and conserve the valued elements of the natural and built environment

- 1.38 Moray has a high quality and perhaps unique environment and the strategy seeks to safeguard and enhance the quality of both its natural and built elements. This can be achieved by protecting the most valued elements and by ensuring that development respects the intrinsic qualities of the wider environment. Natural and built environment areas are important to the high quality image of Moray. Areas such as the Cairngorms, the Moray Firth, the moorlands, forests and historic buildings all contribute positively to that image.

Use energy efficiently by relating development to accessibility

- 1.39 The relationship between housing and employment land is important in terms of location because it is the physical separation of home and work that gives rise to journey to work travel. Land use and transport are thus inextricably linked. In promoting sustainable forms of development and transport, the aim is to minimise the overall need to travel, and therefore the principal land releases are focused on existing main settlements.

Use natural resources in a sustainable manner

- 1.40 The area's natural resources require to be conserved. Forestry, farmland, minerals, waste control, pollution reduction and energy all require to be encouraged, but managed in an efficient and sensitive manner.

Promote community planning and development

- 1.41 The Development Plan has an important role in the promotion of development which is beneficial to the overall functioning of the community. Essential facilities, and access to them, are promoted within the Plan. This allows sustainable development to be promoted in a holistic manner so that the wider community, the environment and the economy are all encouraged.

Update

The Moray Council and its Partners have developed the Moray Community Plan which was published at the beginning of 2001.

Promote development to safeguard the remoter rural areas

- 1.42 Remoter rural areas within Moray and the communities within them are often marginally viable. Therefore, in order to promote development within them and thereby help to sustain their essential services it is proposed to promote development subject to its environmental fit into the landscape.

Therefore, the Structure Plan Strategy is as follows:

Moray Structure Plan Strategy

The Moray Structure Plan Strategy is to promote economic growth and development across Moray whilst safeguarding and enhancing the natural and built environment, and promoting overall sustainability. This will require:

- i) the provision of adequate land for development focused upon the existing settlement pattern
- ii) the securing and targeting of resources to promote economic development and employment opportunities
- iii) the securing of a modern transport and communications network
- iv) the protection and conservation of the valued elements of the natural and built environment
- v) the efficient use of energy related to and in the location of the development
- vi) the sustainable use of natural resources
- vii) the promotion of community planning and development.
- viii) the promotion of well designed and located development in remoter rural areas.



Bothy restoration at Wester Lawrenceton for Julia Hilton. Design by Edge Architecture and Design, Findhorn and built by Philip Stewart, Stuart Voder and Scott Gamble.

Figure 1: Strategic Forecasts: Population, Employment and Households

	1996	2001	2006	2011	% Change 1996-2011
Population	86510	87615	88425	89205	+3.
Employment	36170	37170	37650	38000	+5.1
Households	35066	36500	37940	38990	+11.2

Figures subject to rounding

Source: Strategic Forecasts 1997

Figure 2: Strategic Forecasts: Housing Requirement

	1996-2001	2001-2006	2006-2011	Total 1996-2011
Additional Housing Requirement	1750	1650	1200	4600

Figures subject to rounding.

Source: Strategic Forecasts 1997



Dr Gray's Hospital, Elgin by M.R.T. (Mackie Ramsay and Taylor) Architects