

VISIT MORAY SPEYSIDE

TOURISM REDEFINED: OUR REGION, YOUR FUTURE DESTINATION

Visit Moray Speyside Business Plan

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2030

www.morayspeyside.com

This is not the complete draft of the Business Plan but includes the key information relevant to you as a levy payer. It has been shortened for easier reading.

Please review the document and provide any comments or feedback to the CEO of Visit Moray Speyside, Gemma Cruickshank on gemma@morayspeyside.com by 11th October 2024.

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1. What you said

The initial survey of tourism businesses took place between April 2024 and August 2024 and was carried out via newsletters, emails, group consultations and one-one meetings.

The Tourism Businesses told us:

- That marketing the destination was to continue to be the key priority for Visit Moray Speyside
- Continuation of a collective tourism voice and advocate, to protect their interests and fight their corner

What you Said We Do Well

Feedback from businesses in the region has highlighted several areas where VMS has excelled:

- Marketing & social media: Effective promotion of the region through various digital platforms.
- Weekly Member Newsletter: Regular updates and communications keeping members informed.
- Visit Moray Speyside Website: A comprehensive resource for visitors, showcasing the region's attractions.
- Creation of Visitor Materials: High-quality maps, golf guides, and other materials to enhance visitor experience.
- Business Support: Assistance with legislative changes and other business needs.
- Travel Trade Engagement: Building relationships and promoting the region within the travel trade sector.

What you asked for:

Our members have also identified areas where they would like to see further development:

- Extending the Tourism Season: Initiatives to attract visitors year-round.
- Increased Travel Trade Activities: More engagement with travel trade to boost tourism.
- Responsible Tourism: Promoting sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices.
- Collaboration with Other DMOs: Strengthening partnerships with other Destination Marketing Organisations.

2. Next Five Years – Vision, Aims & Objectives

Marketing

- Enhanced Media and Influencer Engagement
- Targeted Marketing Efforts
- International Marketing Efforts
- Brand Development and Promotion

- Event Promotion and Support
- Community Engagement and Participation
- Market Research and Data Analysis
- Sustainable Tourism Initiatives
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Travel Trade Activity

Advocacy for the Industry

Given the ever-evolving tourism landscape, along with the challenges posed by Brexit, rising Business Rates, the potential introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy, and the ongoing reductions in public sector budgets, the need for a strong, unified voice to represent Moray Speyside’s tourism industry has never been more crucial.

Visit Moray Speyside is fully committed to supporting tourism businesses across the region, ensuring that the sector has a cohesive and influential voice. We will advocate on behalf of the industry with local, regional, and national authorities, championing the interests of businesses and pushing for enhancements to vital infrastructure and visitor services. These improvements include better transport links, clearer and more effective signage, and upgrades to public facilities such as toilets and waste disposal, which are essential to providing an exceptional visitor experience.

As part of our advocacy strategy, we will work to reinforce our position as a key intermediary between the tourism and hospitality sectors and government authorities. Our focus will be on lobbying for policies and initiatives that encourage sustainable growth, such as securing funding for local projects, infrastructure enhancements, and ensuring that any legislation, like the proposed Transient Visitor Levy, is implemented in a way that supports the long-term viability of the sector.

In times of economic uncertainty or public health crises, we will continue to serve as a reliable resource for businesses, offering guidance, information, and support to help the industry navigate challenges effectively. Our role will be to provide a steady hand during difficult periods, ensuring that the sector remains resilient and well-informed.

Our advocacy will also extend beyond the region to national and international tourism events, trade shows, and conferences. By representing Moray Speyside on these platforms, we can ensure that the region’s unique qualities and attractions are showcased to a wider, global audience, helping to drive further interest and investment.

To foster a collaborative approach, we are committed to maintaining open and transparent communication with local businesses, industry leaders, and stakeholders. Regular newsletters, updates, and meetings will be essential to keeping everyone informed and engaged, ensuring that we work together to address the needs of the region effectively.

Additionally, we will look to strengthen our Board of Directors, ensuring diverse representation from across all sectors of the tourism industry. By doing so, we can address a wide range of perspectives, ensuring that our advocacy efforts are comprehensive and inclusive.

3. TRANSIENT VISITOR LEVY

If the Transient Visitor Levy is introduced, and Visit Moray Speyside receives £200,000 in funds, it would be a transformative opportunity for the region's tourism sector. These funds would enable Visit Moray Speyside to invest in a wide range of initiatives designed to support both the visitor experience and the growth of local businesses. The investment would allow us to not only improve infrastructure but also directly support businesses in developing new offerings and enhancing their overall competitiveness.

4. The Visit Moray Speyside BID Area

The operational area of Visit Moray Speyside was chosen to reflect the region of Moray. This refers to Moray Council wards of Elgin, Forres, Findhorn & Kinloss, Dyke Landward, Finnerne, Burghead & Cummington, Hopeman & Covesea, Lossiemouth, Heldon & Laich, Innes, Buckie & District, Findochty & District, Portknockie, Cullen & Deskford, Lennox, Keith, Strathisla, Speyside, Dufftown & District and Glenlivet.

5. Businesses Included

There are 403 eligible tourism businesses in the Visit Moray Speyside BID area whose levy payments will generate approximately £192,000 per annum (net) and an estimated total levy income of £982,471 (net) over 5 years.

Tourism businesses have been defined as those businesses falling within the classifications outlined by VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Scheme (whether the business has signed up to that programme). This definition was chosen as an independent, third-party selection criterion for the inclusion of businesses in the Visit Moray Speyside BID area.

There are four criteria that determine if a business is included in the scope of Visit Moray Speyside:

- The business operates in one of the following sectors:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Activity & Outdoor Centre | Guest House |
| Bed & Breakfast Accommodation | Heritage Centre |
| Bowling Alley | Holiday Complex |
| Brewery / Distillery with visitor centre or shop | Hostel |
| Bunkhouse | Hotel |
| Caravan Park | Information Centre |
| Caravan Site | Inn or Restaurant with rooms |
| Caravan and Camping Site | Museum / Gallery |
| Castle and Visitor Centre | Self-catering Accommodation |
| Castle | Serviced Apartments |
| Chalets | Tourist Shop |
| Exclusive Use Venue | Visitor Centre / Visitor Attraction |

- The business premises are in Moray Speyside, the designated geographical area covered by Visit Moray Speyside.
- The business has a non-domestic rateable value of £2,000 or above.
- The business is eligible to pay non-domestic rates, as detailed on Moray Council Valuation Roll by the local Assessor (even if exempt).

Retail businesses are only included in Visit Moray Speyside if identified as 'tourist shop' through non-domestic rates.

Food and Drink businesses (cafés, pubs, restaurants) are included if they are licensed premises.

Other tourism businesses, such as activity and tour businesses without premises, or below the RV threshold but who would still like to participate in Visit Moray Speyside, will be able to 'opt-in' paying the appropriate minimum annual levy.

Non-tourism businesses can also opt -in as supporters as part of their wider corporate social responsibility commitments.

It has been agreed by the Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors that the levy rate will be based on the rateable value (RV) of the property on the day of the ballot, and which rateable value will remain unchanged throughout the 5-year term of the BID: -

- The BID levy will be paid by the occupier (the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rates)
- There is the potential for an increase in the levy amount throughout the term of the BID through inflationary rises up to 3% which will be agreed by the Board of Directors on a yearly basis.
- All eligible occupiers (of eligible properties) i.e. the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate, as listed on the Local Assessors Valuation Roll on the ballot date will be liable to pay the levy
- The levy payments are not linked to what businesses pay in rates but are based on the rateable value of the property
- The levy must be paid either in one or two instalments, each of which is due within 28 days of invoice
- Any new, eligible tourism business starting within, or coming into the Visit Moray Speyside area during the 5-year term of the Tourism Business Improvement District will be liable for the Tourism BID Levy.
- The Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors has agreed that the levy would be applied to properties with a rateable value of £2,000 and above.
- The Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors have also decided to index-link the Visit Moray Speyside BID Levy to the Retail Price Index (RPI) in order to take account of inflation

6. Exclusions

The Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors decided to exclude premises that have a rateable value of under £2,000. These premises can pay a voluntary levy and become an “opt-in member” should they wish.

The Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors decided that the following categories of property are exempt from paying the levy:

Tourism businesses run or operated solely by volunteers, i.e. that have no paid staff, whether or not they charge an entrance or service fee.

7. The Levy

| RATEABLE VALUE | ANNUAL LEVY | COST PER DAY |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Up to £13,999 | £250 | 68p |
| £30,000 | £540 | £1.48 |
| £50,000 | £900 | £2.46 |
| £100,000 | £1,800 | £4.90 |
| £150,000 | £2,700 | £7.39 |
| £194,500 | £3,500 | £9.58 |

In deciding the proposed levy scale, the Visit Moray Speyside Board of Directors looked at levy arrangements for every other Scottish Business Improvement District, including the nearby Inverness Tourism BID, and considered feedback from businesses during stages of consultation that a fairer charge of levy was required in line with rateable values.

- The levy provides, with some additional income, the amount required to deliver the business plan.
- A percentage model was chosen as it represents a fairer way for businesses dependant on their size. The percentage is set at 1.8% of the rateable value.
- There will be a lower cap of £250 per annum which is affordable for the smallest businesses
- A maximum cap of £3,500 is affordable for the businesses at the higher end of rateable values
- Whilst Visit Moray Speyside is focused predominately on tourism and visitor businesses, any business can ‘opt-in’ to Visit Moray Speyside, subject to approval by the Board of Directors, paying no less than the minimum annual levy payment

8. Visit Moray Speyside Projected Income and Expenditure

| Income | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Income from Tourism BID Levy* | £192,604 | £194,530 | £196,475 | £198,439 | £200,423 | £982,471 |
| Opt-in Memberships** | £2,500 | £3,500 | £4,000 | £5,000 | £6,500 | £21,500 |
| Income from Commercial Activity** | £7,500 | £8,500 | £9,500 | £10,000 | £10,500 | £46,000 |
| Visitor Levy *** | £0 | £0 | £200,000 | £200,000 | £200,000 | £600,000 |
| Other Grants / Funding **** | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Total Income | £202,604 | £206,530 | £409,975 | £413,439 | £417,423 | £1,649,971 |

| Expenditure | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Destination Marketing | £80,000 | £82,000 | £190,000 | £192,000 | £195,000 | £755,000 |
| Supporting Your Business | £10,000 | £10,000 | £23,000 | £24,000 | £20,000 | £253,634 |
| Advocacy for the Industry | £2,000 | £2,000 | £3,500 | £2,000 | £1,800 | |
| Overheads | £110,000 | £112,000 | £193,000 | £195,000 | £198,000 | £575,000 |
| BID Renewal Campaign | | | | | £8,250 | £8,250 |
| Total Expenditure | £201,000 | £206,000 | £409,500 | £413,000 | £423,050 | £1,652,550 |

(*Tourism BID levy increases annually with a 1% inflation increase if the Board of Directors agree to increase).

(**Opt-in Membership and Income from Commercial Activity is currently not secured or committed by others. Therefore, in the event any or all of this funding is not realised then the scope of some of the projects outlined will be adjusted correspondingly, to ensure that they remain within budget).

(***Subject to introduction of the Visitor Levy and dependant on model set, figures above are subject to change dependant on introduction and allocation).

(****Subject to available grants and funding and successful applications).

9. Next Steps

26th September – Draft Business Plan Submitted

17th October – Final Submission of Business Plan, no changes can be made from this date

6th February – Issue of Ballot papers, this will remain open for six weeks for businesses to cast their vote

20th March – Final date to return Ballot papers

21st March - Day of the count of votes which will determine the future of tourism in Moray

Full Business Plan will be issued out to all levy payers in January 2025 with consultations taking place through January, February and March 2025.

