

**August
2016**



FROM THE GROUND UP
LANDS & PARKS



the **moray** council

In Moray the big news has been the announcement that US aerospace giant Boeing is set to invest £100million at RAF Lossiemouth in developing a support and training facility for the fleet of P8 Poseidon maritime reconnaissance aircraft due to arrive there over the next few years.

The significance of the announcement is underscored by the fact that it was made by none other than the Prime Minister on the opening day of the Farnborough Air Show.

Only a few days earlier I readily accepted an invitation to a confidential briefing by US and British military officials on the £3billion deal between the Ministry of Defence and Boeing which will see Britain acquire nine of the Poseidon aircraft, all of which will be based at Lossiemouth.

The arrival of the aircraft, along with the development of the support and training facility, will represent an unprecedented economic boost for Moray, bringing with it highly skilled personnel and their families to the area.

Allow me to pause for a second and turn the clock back to the defence review which not so long ago cast serious doubt over the survival of RAF Lossiemouth. It was only in 2010 that Moray was in real danger of losing both its air bases and an air of pessimism hung over the whole area. Kinloss did indeed close as an air base, but

Lossiemouth was thankfully saved after a determined local campaign. Now Lossiemouth can look forward to an exciting future as not only one of the RAF's foremost Typhoon bases, but also as home to the Poseidon fleet.

This huge investment in our economy is of course massively welcome but from a council perspective it will present challenges and challenges that will have to be met. The incoming personnel and their families will need somewhere to live and somewhere to be educated. They will need leisure and community facilities. Their arrival will place extra demands on the services that the council provides and we will have to start planning for that now.

There are already development proposals in place for new housing in Elgin, Lossiemouth and many other communities in the years ahead and it is to be hoped that the new

Lossiemouth High School will be completed by 2020.

However, it remains to be seen what further inward investment, and potential new employment, the area might expect as a result of the Boeing announcement and whether further provision might have to be made to cope with the resultant influx of military and civilian families.

These are exciting times for Moray and while the Boeing investment alone will bring new investment and fresh blood into the area, I believe it could also be the catalyst for many other big name players to follow and to put down roots in Moray.

We must ensure that we are ready and able to seize the wonderful opportunities that unquestionably lie ahead.

Roddy Burns
Chief Executive



Inside story

Editorial

August is here, and although it's not been the sunniest summer so far, we hope that you've been enjoying it and making the most of what Moray has to offer – bracing walks on our beaches, a bit of dolphin-spotting, or perhaps a stroll through Elgin's beautiful Cooper Park. Our colleagues in Lands and Parks have been busy keeping our

green spaces in top form for you – see what they've been up to on [page 3](#).

Six teenage interns joined us for a month (see July's 'Welcome Aboard') and they have shared their experience of working with us – see [page 11](#). Not to be outdone, our colleagues across the organisation have been busy taking

part in charity hill climbs – and more! See [page 12](#) for what's been going on.

As always, for you to snap a selfie of your summer holiday – perhaps reading *Connect* on a sun lounger in Spain – and send it to us at connectnews@moray.gov.uk. There's a chocolatey prize next month for the best pic!



FROM THE GROUND UP

LANDS & PARKS



The Lands & Parks team enjoy a lot of friendly banter.

Moray's parks are at their prime in the summertime, tended by our colleagues in Lands and Parks and enjoyed by residents of all ages – though it's not just the parks that our crews look after. They manage the cemeteries as well, ensuring that Moray's green spaces – and their visitors – are well-cared for at all stages of life. *Connect* visited the teams at the Elgin's Cooper Park depot to find out how they manage the grass under our feet.

There are 25 full-time and four seasonal members of staff in the Lands and Parks department based in Elgin, who look after around 270 hectares (670 acres) of land across Moray. The 'jewel in the crown' is Cooper Park in the centre of Elgin, with its duck pond, playgrounds, aviary, tennis courts, bowling green, cricket pitch, and riverside walking and cycle paths.

Opened in 1903, the park is 24 hectares (nearly 60 acres) of leisure facility in the heart of the town, requiring a fleet of 13 tractors/ride-on mowers and a mini-excavator.

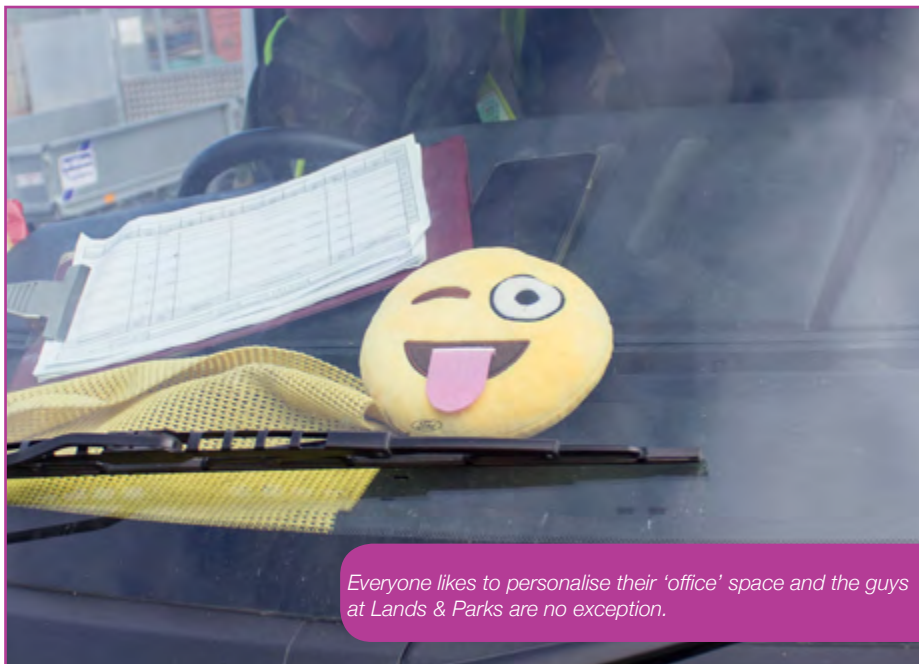
Keith Ewen, Chargehand Gardener, has been with us for 18 years: "We want to live in a nice environment and we want the people of Moray to live in one too," he says. "We feel that we're making a difference. When you see the kids and folk using the amenities, it feels good to know we've added to their enjoyment."

Keith and the team wish that they could do more to beautify our green spaces. "It's sad that there are no more floral displays," he says. "But it's positive to have a job, to be out in the fresh air, and if we can do as good a job as we can with the limited resources that we have, that's the way to go about it. I'd



"If we can do as good a job as we can with the limited resources that we have, that's the way to go about it."

Keith Ewen, Chargehand Gardener



Everyone likes to personalise their 'office' space and the guys at Lands & Parks are no exception.

"A sense of humour helps."

Steve Davies, Foreman Gravedigger



"I love being outdoors - the litter picking, hedge trimming, all of it."

Steven Taylor, Seasonal Gardener

rather people say that we're doing well at what we are doing."

Also on the Elgin crew are Mike Anderson, Gardener/Tractor Driver, who has been with us for 23 years, and Steven Taylor, who has just joined the crew, having recently moved to Buckie from Northumberland. *"I love being outdoors - the litter picking, hedge trimming, all of it,"* he says.

While the Elgin depot is located at Cooper Park, the team go anywhere in the town to carry out their maintenance - and it's not just a fair-weather job. As well as routine tasks, in winter the crew carries out the installation and repair of play

equipment; repairs to paths, walls, fences, football pitches and goalposts, the boat pond and aviary; hedge and rose pruning, tree maintenance and landscaping works.

They also assist Roads Maintenance in wintry weather, clearing paths of snow and ice. A training programme takes place during the winter months when there is slightly more flexibility within the squad.

"We feel that we're making a difference"

Keith Ewen, Chargehand Gardener

In the winter, repairs are also carried out to cemeteries: sunken graves and paths are fixed, headstone areas are cleaned and shrubbery is pruned. Steve Davies, Foreman Gravedigger, has been with us for 31 years, 30 of those as a gravedigger. He and his team prepare graves and dig out the foundations for headstones, and attend up to 12 funerals each week to fill graves in.

Three decades as a gravedigger hasn't changed Steve's outlook on life: *"You get used to it. Some people wouldn't do it but it's not as bad as folk think it is,"* he says. *"When a family has gone away from the funeral content, you feel a bit better knowing you've done a good job."*





"Some people wouldn't do it but it's not as bad as folk think it is."

Steve Davies, Foreman Gravedigger

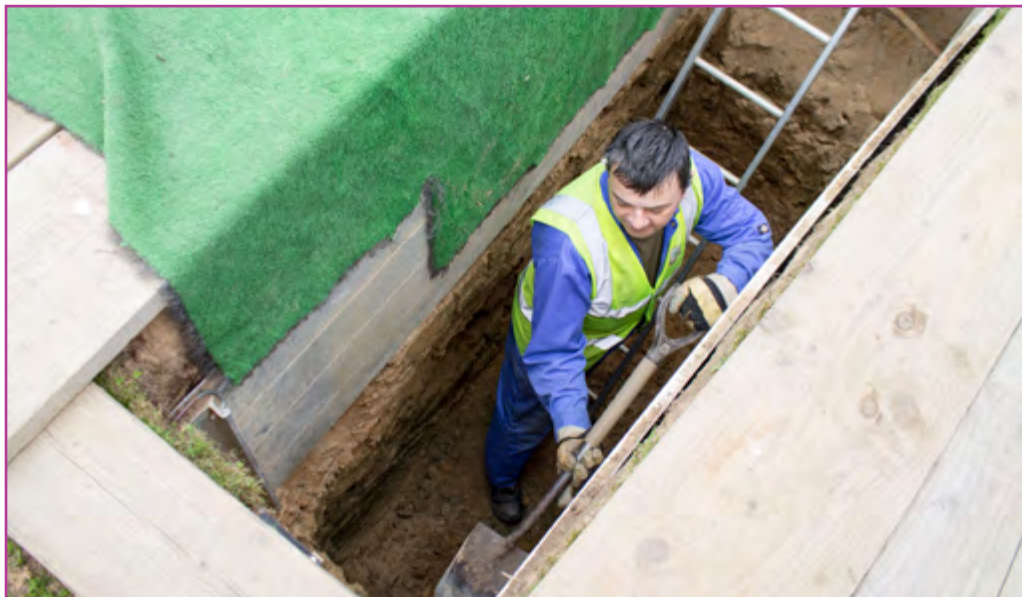
Using a mini-digger machine, it takes 60-90 minutes to dig a standard grave, depending on the soil: in winter, they may have to dig through up to 1.5 feet of frost. When a grave is required, the undertakers phone the registrar, who calls Steve to notify the crew that will dig the hole 1-2 days before the funeral: three squads, based in Elgin, Buckie and Keith, cover the whole of Moray. The funeral record books are still filled in by hand: the one that Steve is currently using dates back to 1907. *"There are plans to go digital,"* Steve says, *"but I like the continuity."*



It may look like something out of Hogwarts, but this burial records book dates back to 1907 and is still used today.

Digital life does occasionally intrude: during one funeral, a mobile phone fell out of the pocket of one of the men lowering the coffin, landing in the open grave. Steve had to climb in to retrieve the phone, though even he admits that it felt *"a bit weird"* to be in an open grave next to a coffin. The phone's owner saw the funny side – and Steve agrees that in this role, *"a sense of humour helps."*

So whether you are having fun in the sun or saying farewell to a loved one, the Lands and Parks team is on hand to keep Moray a green and pleasant land.



TMCERDP

EMPLOYEE REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In what follows 'manager(s)' means all or any of: managers, supervisors, forepersons, chargehands, team leaders, etc; That is: any staff member responsible for the work of others.

Useful and effective

Yes! ERDP continues to be an important tool with which many managers are able to keep employees' effort and development focussed on delivering our services in accordance with our plans and priorities. It's also an important forum in which an employee can discuss progress, concerns and ideas, and offer his/her manager feedback about how best to support staff.

But?

A survey of managers at the end of last year confirmed what previous staff surveys have indicated, i.e. that some managers are not providing this opportunity to their staff, at least not in a clear, consistent and recorded way. Staff might therefore not be getting the direction and feedback they need, or the opportunity to be involved in planning their work and development, and offer upward feedback. CMT have understandably resolved to implement measures to ensure that all employees will have had an 'appraisal' & development planning session by end April 2017. They have also resolved that, in future, ERDP will be implemented at least annually with all eligible staff.

Difficult?

Tools like ERDP, often called 'appraisal' or 'assessment', can sometimes be very complicated and time consuming. Managers and staff can be disinclined to even try them.

Straightforward and flexible

TMC ERDP is not at all complex. Instead, it is a very straightforward process, readily adaptable and scalable to the needs of the post, post-holder and service.

Training

Of course, straightforward or not, some managers will not have participated in 'appraisal' or 'personal development plans'. Others may simply want to refresh their understanding or check they are 'doing it right'. The TMC Employee Development team provide briefings (typically two hours) to those managers who want to be clear and confident about getting the most out of ERDP. More dates for these sessions will be put on CLIVE shortly.

In the meantime work is already being planned to provide training to managers at all levels in those services which recently participated in focus groups, etc. run by HR/Culture working group.

Change?

With its simplicity and minimal bureaucracy, it is thought that the current ERDP is a useful tool. But plainly some services, managers and perhaps staff are finding it does not meet their needs. With that in mind, while the current approach should be used until further notice, work is being done to consider how ERDP can be made more useable and purposeful for those services where it is currently underused.

While retaining the widely agreed core principles of the current ERDP, future developments may include: improved guidance; a tiered approach with different frameworks for different categories of staff (there's already a specific framework for senior managers); supporting assessment checklists for manual/operator/carer/support roles.

Watch this space. If you have any questions about ERDP, feel free to contact Martin Kirwan, Employee Development Adviser, or any of his ED colleagues, or your usual HR adviser/officer.



7

Corporate Management & Governance

One of the areas of responsibility within the Moray Management Methods that underpins all council activity is corporate management and governance.

This is about managers making sure the services and activities they are responsible for promote and deliver the council's strategic aims by ensuring the services delivered under their control are aligned to deliver the corporate priorities within the corporate governance framework.

That framework consists of organisational (corporate) objectives that are set out in a number of documents and partnership arrangements:

- ✓ Moray Ten Year Plan (Moray 2026)
- ✓ Corporate Plan
- ✓ Annual Report
- ✓ Local Code of Corporate Governance
- ✓ Community Planning Partnership


Primarily, managers should ensure that service activities are designed to help the council achieve its corporate objectives. Managers should provide leadership by keeping staff informed about these objectives and being an advocate for the council priorities within their services and managers should also think about how they can engage across boundaries for integrated working and resourcing.

To be able to do this effectively, managers must:

- ✓ Read the latest version of the Moray Ten Year Plan (Moray 2026) and know and understand the strategic priorities, then discuss and advance these priorities within their managers in the context of their services regularly (at least twice a year) and ensure their managers cascade this to their team
- ✓ Read the most up to date Corporate Plan, reviewing and prioritising service activities so that progress is made on the corporate aims and initiatives, releasing work or securing agreement for it where the link to corporate objectives is not clear
- ✓ Be aware of the council's community planning partners and foster collaborative working arrangements that will help achieve corporate aims and review partnership arrangements regularly to ensure they continue to be effective and relevant.

HR Noticeboard

1. buy cakes
2. offer cakes to colleagues
3. remind colleagues to
nominate me for STAR
Award!



Do you know a colleague or a team who stand out from the crowd? Then why not nominate them for a **STAR** Award?

Nomination forms and guidance will be available from 15 August from:

- ✓ HR pages of the intranet under Employee Engagement,
- ✓ Calling HR on (01343) 563261 or emailing hr@moray.gov.uk,
- ✓ departmental admin teams

Nominations will be accepted until 09 September. Nominees and winners will be notified later in the year and awards will be presented at a ceremony in November along with the latest long service awards.

Golden Ticket

Invitations have been sent out for the next employee conference, the first of which will take place in Forres on 22 September – which will be here before we know it, no doubt! Following the event in Forres is Buckie on 29 September and Elgin on 04 October.

Thanks to those of you who have already responded to your invitation. If you have received an invitation but have not yet replied, we would appreciate an RSVP as soon as possible to let us know you whether you intend to come – and we hope that you do as it is great to see as many colleagues as possible.

It is well worth making the effort to attend as the event gives you the chance to discuss with senior management issues that concern the council and the service you work for; it also gives you an opportunity to meet with colleagues from other services within the council.

Feedback from colleagues who have attended previous conferences has always been positive and has helped give management a better understanding of the issues that matter to staff at all levels within the organisation.

This will be the sixth employee conference and this year's theme is 'Shaping the Future' of public services – discussing the priorities, financial pressures and opportunities for change over the coming years.

The full programme for this year's conference, which will run from 9.30am to 1.30pm, is still being finalised. Attendees will be informed of the schedule for the day nearer the time – we look forward to seeing you if you are attending.

Carbon Connect



Beechbrae Busters

More good news from our Energy Savers this month: motivated by their Energy Champion – June Smith, Project Worker with Moray Youth Justice – staff at the Beechbrae Education Centre in Elgin have saved a whopping £2,800 off their energy bill in the last year. That's £1,300 off their electricity bill and £1,500 off their gas, a savings of over £200 per month!

"We've had our windows replaced and some doors, and we've had our loft insulation improved," explains

Business Support Team Leader Linda Magill. *"That has made a big difference, but we're also more aware of the difference we can all make by switching off the equipment we are not using."*

An electricity monitor is located at reception in Beechbrae, so staff can see at a glance how much their electricity is costing in real time each time they pass by. The team also participated in Earth Hour earlier this year, and June lets the staff know on a monthly basis whether they have used more or less energy than in

the same period in the year before. *"We've also all got our 'green' pencils, pens and mouse mats with the 'switch off' messages,"* says Catherine Hall, Business Support Assistant. *"It just becomes routine to switch things off."*

Well done to the Beechbrae team for being energy busters!

Could you be an Energy Champion at your workplace? You can make a difference! Contact the energy office: energy@moray.gov.uk for more info.

NEXT STOP

The Plan

Reps from ICT and Human Resources are working on designing and launching a brand new, interactive and user-friendly intranet which every member of our staff will have access to. It's intended to give you quicker access to relevant information without having to hunt for things like policies and downloads, and also to offer a more engaging and collaborative workspace.

The Journey

Coming soon to your screen will be the first look at the new design, from a link on the current intranet site. This should give you an idea of how the new intranet will look and operate. Then we'll begin the task of transferring documents, policies and information (some of which already exists on Sharepoint) to make everything easier to access within a few clicks. We'll be liaising with managers throughout this process to ensure it's as streamlined as possible and there's no duplication of efforts.

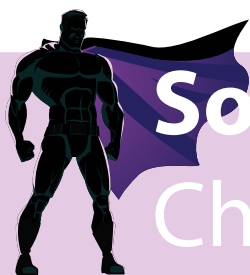
The Destination

We've already spoken to some staff, who've given us their ideas about what they want and need from a new intranet. Their first request? A search engine. This is a key priority for us too, and one which will definitely be provided. Easy access to policies and entitlements, payslips and expenses claims have also been identified as popular processes you need from a new intranet.

But we're still taking on your ideas. If you've got any thoughts about what you want from the new-and-improved intranet, let us know. We can't try to provide it if we don't know you want it! We can't promise to provide everything you ask for, but we'll be doing our best to make sure we cater for the main things.

Perhaps you're a member of admin staff and are repeatedly asked the same questions from your team (think special leave, TOIL policy, or something else?) Are you a worker who doesn't get access to a computer during the day and would like to be able to log on from a tablet or mobile device on the go – what are you wanting to see when you log on? Or, as a manager, what do you require the intranet to deliver for you and your team?

You can let us know by emailing webmaster@moray.gov.uk. We're looking to go live, with HR information the first to populate the new intranet site, this Autumn – watch this space!



Souper Chef

Good luck to mobile school chef Richard Sharp who has won through to the final of this year's Scottish School Cook of the Year competition.

Richard is one of seven contenders who will be competing in the final at Cook School Scotland in mid-August. Look out for September's *Connect* to find out how he got on!



Steady, Go

Career Ready is a UK-wide charity linking employers with schools and colleges to open up the world of work to young people.

Places are decided by application form and interview and successful pupils are given a mentor to guide them through the programme and the internship which is an important part of the Career Ready programme.

The pupils do the internship at their mentor's place of work for four weeks over the summer, experiencing the world of work. At Moray Council there are six interns across a number of departments – transportation, IT, HR and education and social care.

The interns were interviewed about their experiences by one of their number at the end of week three.

Most were excited about the prospect of taking part in Career Ready but one or two admitted that they only did it because their parents wanted them to. However, once they were on the programme everyone felt excited. The allocated workplace is not necessarily an area that the interns would consider for a future career as the internship is more about transferable skills and developing confidence. All interns agreed that they had gained confidence during their placement.

As well as confidence, interns have valued learning about the world of work, understanding their departments and improving their communication and self-management skills. At the end of the week all interns said they were enjoying their time with the council.

In addition to soft skills, experience was also gained by some of the interns in practical areas such as IT, PR, photocopying and printing.

While all interns were happy with their placement, some felt it could have been improved by knowing before starting what their programme would be and others felt there could have been longer time spent in each area at the one time. For example, instead of two days each week at the library, they could have been combined to make one full week there.

"Interesting," "packed," "experience," "unforgettable," and "enlightening" were among the replies when the interns were asked to sum up their experience in one word.

All the interns have benefited from the opportunity given to them by Career Ready and will be able to include this in their CVs for future employment or personal statements for university applications.

**by Katie O'Neill
& Latoyha Stewart-McLeod**

Career Ready Interns



Peak Performance!

Customer service adviser Dottie Wildman went up hill and down dale as she and a friend took part in a charity walk in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

They completed a tough 13-mile hike which took in four peaks in the Lake District National Park.

Dottie and pal Sue Crooks joined 300 other walkers in scaling Bow Fell, Esk Pike and Great End – all around 3,000ft – before tackling Scafell Pike, at 3,200ft England's highest mountain.

Amid magnificent lakeland scenery, they completed the trek in 10hours 47mins 43secs and raised more than £700 in the process.

Dottie, who describes herself as an outdoor person, was sponsored by friends and by colleagues in the council's contact centre. She has run a number of 10k events, completed her first half-marathon last year and has recently taken up Munro bagging.

"The hike was fantastic and the scenery was absolutely beautiful," said Dottie. "It was hard going but I loved it and I would do it again."



Bubbly for a Barnett

Staff in the council's employment support services are fund-raising to help a colleague's daughter who suffers from an emotionally upsetting condition.

The 12-year-old has suffered from alopecia – hair loss – since she was a toddler and is about to go to secondary school.

Over the years she has had a variety of wigs through the NHS and although they have served their purpose cosmetically, they have proved uncomfortable, particularly since the girl is active in amateur dramatics and athletics.

As secondary school looms, she is also becoming increasingly self-conscious and fearful of being left humiliated if it becomes widely known that she wears a wig.

Her dad's council workmates have now set about raising the £2,000 it will cost to buy her a good quality wig and

have begun by holding a competition to guess the weight of a courgette grown by one of his colleagues.

Winner of the prosecco was Nena Shawcross from housing support.

Staff in employment support are planning further fund-raisers and would be grateful either for donations or any ideas about how they might go about reaching the £2,000 target:
connectnews@moray.gov.uk

