



Open for Business

Stirling Economic Strategy 2009-2013

Our vision for Stirling

A location of choice with a growing population and vibrant economy that is open for business

A place with jobs and opportunities for all

A place with a commitment to sustainable development and carbon reduction.



Our strategy

Our economic strategy is based on the principles of sustainable growth, innovation and enterprise, resilience and economic opportunity.

We will work to achieve and maintain:

- A vital, vibrant and diverse Stirling city centre
- Economically assured businesses, investors, employees and families
- Diverse and sustainable urban and rural economies and communities
- A greater diversity of jobs, including those of higher value
- An appropriately skilled workforce
- Maximised income and minimised poverty

We will deliver our strategy through a programme of actions which are focused on:

- Economic success
- Business support
- Skills development and access to jobs
- Financial inclusion
- Communicating confidence
- Building for the future

Our strategy is supported by detailed implementation plans. Achieving our strategy will require effective partnership working between a very wide range of private, public and third sector organisations. It will depend on the close involvement and active participation of our communities and citizens.



Economic success

Located at Scotland's heart, Stirling is a successful place. Many of our citizens are well educated and enjoy good jobs with higher than average earnings. We offer a skilled workforce to employers throughout central Scotland, and our excellent schools, college and university provide high quality education, skills development and training. 55% of Scotland's population live within an hour's travel of the City of Stirling.

Our strategic location, high quality urban and rural environment, and excellent quality of life have led to a substantial economic expansion and population growth in the last decade.

We have a high density of VAT registered businesses, and are successful at nurturing and growing both new and existing businesses. We have an outstanding opportunity to take full advantage of our location and assets to build our economic success and contribution to the economy of Scotland, still further.



Actions

We will ensure the economic success of our citizens and our contribution to the sustainable growth of the Scottish economy.

We will work to increase the range and number of jobs, including high value jobs, in the Stirling area. A key challenge will be to ensure the local economy can deliver sufficient jobs to support our growing population. This will include enhanced actions to support new business start ups, growth of successful existing businesses, inward investment and relocation from elsewhere, and capitalising on the knowledge base in Stirling University and Forth Valley College. We are determined that, in growing our economy, we also increase its sustainability and resilience. We will support significant improvements in environmental performance by our businesses, both to enhance competitiveness and in pursuit of our commitment to a carbon neutral Stirling. We will continue to pursue a sustainable transport infrastructure, both within our area and for those travelling to and from it.

We will deliver an integrated system for sustainable business growth, innovation and enterprise.

We will foster a culture of innovation and enterprise, and work to make and improve the connections between all parts of our economic development system.

We will identify and pursue areas of competitive advantage.

The Stirling economy is diverse and has few clear business sectors of significant scale. While this may increase the resilience of the local economy, it also increases the challenge of supporting economic development through a sector based approach. Tourism, retail, and higher value business services are notable exceptions, and we also have a high density of jobs in the environmental sector. In each of these sectors we will work to support

business growth in these existing areas of strength, both in absolute volume and value of economic contribution. We recognise that tourism and retail, in particular, are sectors often associated with low skill, low wage employment, and so we will work to enhance both the skills base and earning potential in these areas. We will also pursue development and growth of other distinctive areas of competitive advantage, including food and drink, sport and leisure, cultural and creative industries, and environmental and clean technologies. The City of Stirling is a key economic asset for the whole region, so we will work to ensure a vibrant and successful city centre which benefits our urban population, our rural communities, and our visitors. We value diversity in our business base, and will support the essential and growing contribution of social, community and co-operative enterprises.

We will maximise connectivity and co-ordinated action, within the Stirling area, and with neighbouring economies.

Stirling is integrated into the Forth Valley region, and the wider East of Scotland economic area. We are also closely related to the economy of Greater Glasgow. Equally, we share opportunities and challenges with the more rural economies of Perth and Kinross, Argyll, and the Highlands and Islands. A significant proportion of our citizens chose to live in Stirling but work in neighbouring economies. Many other people work in Stirling but live elsewhere. We will seek to ensure the highest quality retail, leisure and cultural opportunities for our commuting citizens, and for those who travel to work here in order to maximise their local economic contribution. Wherever there is benefit to be found in partnership working, either within Stirling or with our neighbouring economies, we will seek to maximise the advantage from it.

Business support

We have many excellent business support services, but these are not as effectively integrated or accessible to our businesses as they might be, and there are undoubted gaps in our provision.

We will engage directly with private sector businesses and respond to their expressed needs.

We will work in close partnership with businesses and their representative organisations, to assess and address the needs of our businesses. Effective partnership between private and public sector organisations, wherever it can deliver added value, will be a hallmark of our actions. The Stirling Business Panel, with over 500 members, represents a key voice for our businesses. We will continue to support the development of the Business Panel, and other channels of meaningful engagement with our businesses.

We will provide effective, tailored business support.

Based on a thorough analysis of the needs of our businesses, our current support arrangements, and the gaps within them, we will continue to enhance the effectiveness and user-friendliness of our business support services. It is essential that all support services are fit for purpose, readily accessible, and clearly communicated.

We will provide appropriate business space.

Lack of availability of appropriate office, industrial and commercial space is regularly identified by our businesses as a constraint on economic development. We will develop and implement a new business space strategy to address this issue. This will include enhancing the connections between, and clarifying the roles of, existing providers of business space including Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling University Innovation Park, the Stirling Development Agency, and private sector providers. We will pursue opportunities for re-use and re-development of existing parts of our built environment

to provide part of our distinctive mix of appropriate business space. We will strive to ensure that all of our business space operates to the highest standards of environmental performance.

We will develop and support a social enterprise network.

The social economy is of growing importance within Stirling, and has potential to become even more significant within our business mix. We will actively engage with existing social and community enterprises, and third sector service providers, to encourage further growth and development. We will also encourage the start up of new social, community and co-operative ventures. This will be achieved through measures which include enhancing the support infrastructure for social enterprise, including sharing of experience and best practice; maximising access to funding support; procurement from third sector service providers; supporting specific social enterprise development projects; and utilising the knowledge base on socio-economic development within Stirling University.

We will support rural business growth and new business development.

Existing activities include the work of Stirling Enterprise Park to help businesses access funding from the Scottish Rural Development Programme and on rural business support outreach, and the Forth Valley LEADER programme. We will build on these to enhance further the support for our rural businesses. In all of our economic development actions, including provision of business space, we will be mindful of the distinctive opportunities for, and needs of, our rural businesses. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park has a central role to play in the economy of Stirling, and we will seek to maximise the benefit this key partner brings.



Skills development and access to jobs

Stirling enjoys excellent education and training provision. Our schools, College, University, and our many voluntary, social enterprise, community and private sector providers of training and skills development equip our citizens with the qualifications, training and support to enable them to succeed. We must capitalise on this resource to ensure the best possible match between our education and training and the skills needs of employers. We must also ensure that the opportunities to learn are available to all who wish to benefit from them.

We will provide co-ordinated pathways for skills development and learning.

We will work to integrate and promote the learning opportunities available to our citizens, in order that all those who can benefit from them are able to do so, to the fullest extent of their aspirations and abilities. Partnership working between all those involved in education, training and skills development will be central to achieving this.

We will ensure the achievement of core employability skills for all those seeking work, including young people.

We will continue to work with the Stirling Business Panel, other representative business organisations, Skills Development Scotland, Sector Skills Councils and others to ensure that the fullest possible understanding of employer requirements is built into the design and delivery of our education and training programmes. We will develop and support work placements and internships within our education and training wherever appropriate. We will enhance further our programmes of enterprise education. Through the work of our schools, including implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, we will prepare our young people for the world of work.





We will encourage and support volunteering and other routes into economic activity.

Through the new third sector interface, and in partnership with our voluntary organisations and social enterprises, we will create further opportunities and support for people wishing to enter or return to work to do so. We will pursue the creation and maintenance of meaningful employment for them.

We will build the capacity of employers to provide more apprenticeship, training and employment opportunities, in particular for young people, in ways that enhance business competitiveness and profitability.

We will seek to take full advantage of available funding for employers to support apprenticeships and other work-related training. Our commitment to enhancing this, as well as work placements and internships, is critically dependent on supporting employers in developing appropriate opportunities. Our large public sector employers have major opportunities and a responsibility to support apprenticeships, work placements, work-related learning, and graduate employment, and we will work with them to maximise these.

We will identify and address barriers to accessing jobs, including transport access issues.

All available information on barriers to employment will be assembled, and supplemented through direct discussion with those currently not in employment. On this basis we will work systematically to overcome those barriers. Wherever possible, we will use innovative approaches, including new solutions to transport access issues in rural and semi-rural areas.



Financial inclusion

Although many of our citizens enjoy relative affluence, this masks a high degree of social and economic polarisation. Stirling has, by some measures, the second highest spread of rich and poor in the UK and 6% of our citizens live in areas rated as the most deprived 15% of Scotland. The effects of poverty and disadvantage are evidenced in the income, health, learning and community safety of these citizens. The recession of 2008-09 is worsening this polarisation and excluding many more of our citizens, particularly our young people, from meaningful economic activity. We are determined to tackle this.

We will develop and deliver an Antipoverty Strategy.

Our Antipoverty Strategy will identify and address both the underlying and ongoing causes of poverty and the necessary steps that need to be taken to turn it around. We will seek to maximise income through supporting people into employment and other meaningful economic activity, and by ensuring access to available benefits. We also, however, recognise the complex, multi-faceted issues around reducing and minimising the risk of poverty. We will develop and implement effective short, medium and long term actions to address these issues.

We will provide integrated support for all those wishing to be economically active.

Through our work to create new jobs, our provision of education and training, our support for the growth of social enterprises and voluntary organisations, and our provision of advice services we will help our citizens access and maintain economic activity. We will work to raise aspirations and esteem, and to provide opportunities and support so that those aspirations can be achieved.

We will provide comprehensive and integrated advice and support services for vulnerable families and individuals.

Stirling has many excellent advice and support services, but these are not currently well integrated or co-ordinated. As such, they are not benefitting our citizens as fully as they might. We will review in detail all advice services, and develop and implement proposals for significantly enhanced, more integrated, and readily accessible provision. We will focus our advice services on preventing and minimising problems wherever possible, and supporting effective resolution when problems do arise.



Communicating confidence

Our pride in our place is one of our greatest assets. We have a great deal to celebrate, and can face current and future economic conditions with confidence. Despite this, many of our citizens and businesses are understandably anxious about their jobs, sustainability, profitability, and prospects. This anxiety is a significant constraint on economic activity. It is essential that we counter this, and that we maximise the potential of Stirling, by communicating our strengths, successes and opportunities. Stirling, as Scotland's Heart, has an excellent brand, which we can continue to develop, refine and promote. We have a tremendous network of Business Ambassadors who demonstrate, through their business success and in their message about Stirling, our confidence in our place.

We will deliver effective and appropriate marketing.

We will maximise the impact and effectiveness of the Stirling, Scotland's Heart brand, promoting, broadening and supporting its use through a co-ordinated, integrated approach. We will share marketing intelligence, opportunities and activities across all brand partners who are engaged in developing the Stirling economy. We will promote Stirling as a place to work, to live, to visit, to do business, and to learn. We recognise that the appearance of our city, towns and villages are a key part of how we do that, and so we will work to ensure a high quality look and feel in our urban and rural communities. We will tell our story with pride.

We will define Stirling's 'confidence' level and work to keep it high.

Through all of our actions and behaviours we will demonstrate confidence in what we have achieved and can achieve. We will celebrate our successes. Our Business Panel survey already gives us a good measure of business confidence. We will build on this by broadening our assessment of confidence to other organisations and to our citizens.

We will demonstrate Stirling's contribution to the economy of Scotland.

We will develop appropriate and effective measures of our contribution to Scotland's economic success, both quantitative and qualitative. This will include development and delivery of innovative projects and approaches which can stand as exemplars for Scotland and the wider world. We will use this information to communicate with our citizens and businesses, and with those who might wish to do business here. We will use it to inform policy makers and organisations, within Scotland and beyond, who can help us to succeed further through support and investment.



Building for the future

Following a period of sustained growth, the 2008-2009 recession is severely testing Stirling's economic performance. We are determined to protect and support our businesses and citizens through the recession and to accelerate progress towards a more successful and sustainable future as soon as economic conditions allow. Equally, we are determined to learn from this experience, and to tackle the challenges of climate change, diminishing fossil fuels, financial constraints, and an ageing population. We will respond to the opportunities we have to develop new jobs and businesses, and build a more sustainable, responsible, resilient economy for the future.

We will develop and deliver a new Economic Strategy for Stirling based on sustainable growth, innovation and enterprise, resilience and economic opportunity.

This document is the first edition of our new economic strategy. It will be regularly reviewed and updated, while remaining focused on our key principles. The most important aspect of our strategy is that it provides a framework for action, and we will concentrate the largest part of our efforts on delivery. Our strategy, and the actions that result from it, contain much that is innovative and challenging. We will learn from its implementation and share what we learn through exemplars and by facilitating debate on key issues. Through this, we will also learn from others.

We will intervene early in key work areas including retraining, business retention, and maintaining and developing skills.

Our immediate focus is on protecting and supporting our businesses and citizens through the recession and its consequences by maintaining productivity and employment levels as far as possible. We also see these measures, however, as actions for the future, which will secure our business base and provide a more flexible, more highly skilled workforce. Many of the jobs and businesses which will ensure economic success for our citizens in the long term will be in new and emerging areas and ventures. Our skills development and business support will take full account of the need to create and maintain jobs for the future.

We will develop measures of economic performance which are effective and appropriate to our economic strategy and conditions.

We have adopted a range of performance targets and indicators by which progress against this strategy will be measured. In doing so, we have recognised that not all of the measures available to us are fully fit for purpose. We are committed, therefore, to developing new measures which will enable us to assess our progress more effectively and so better inform future actions. This will include the development of a new economic model, through which measures of sustainability, resilience and responsibility will be added to those for growth and economic value.



Stirling Community Planning Partnership, November 2009

This economic strategy is derived from Stirling's Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government. Further details, including the analysis on which the strategy is based, and performance targets and indicators, can be found in the Single Outcome Agreement, available at www.stirling.gov.uk/shapingstirling

