

My Future's in Falkirk The Way Forward



the future is something we create



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Foreword



Falkirk's business community is strong and diverse with extensive roots in the local community. Our businesses compete in ever more challenging markets, yet we believe we have the ambition to succeed. Our future prosperity requires that the Falkirk area is open and vibrant for business, mustering the effort and resources around us to compete. We are delighted to play our part in the *My Future's in Falkirk* initiative and value the partnership and opportunities it brings.

George Stevenson,
Chairman –
Falkirk for Business



Our ambition for the Falkirk area is to be recognised as “the place to be.” Through *My Future's in Falkirk* we want to encourage our people and businesses to achieve the very best for themselves and for the wider community. We welcome the support of the local business community and our partners and their involvement in this innovative and energetic partnership. Through the efforts of the *My Future's in Falkirk* partnership we believe that the Falkirk economy will prosper and realise its full potential.

Cllr Craig Martin,
Leader -
Falkirk Council



What is My Future's in Falkirk?

The future is something we create... and in the Falkirk area we are working to create a strong and successful economy that plays a significant role in the global economy, helps business to flourish and enables each of our residents to realise their potential.

My Future's in Falkirk is an economic development initiative. It represents a journey, aiming to:

- Make Falkirk a great place to be, a place to live, work, visit and invest,
- Diversify its economic base,
- Build on its undoubted potential, and
- Attain the peak of ambition, for our people and for business.

In 2002, Falkirk Council, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley and BP came together to form *My Future's in Falkirk*, a public and private sector partnership to tackle job losses in the petrochemical industry. The partnership initiated a series of projects to make a real impact for the area's economy and to promote Falkirk in national and international arenas. This work reinforced our capacity for change. As we gained momentum, we created additional projects and generated a culture shift, a new ethos that encourages everyone involved to think differently.

My Future's in Falkirk has engaged a wide range of bodies in delivering its activities. This includes companies such as Ineos, Kemfinc and Forth Ports and organisations including Forth Valley College, Skills Development Scotland, British Waterways, and Jobcentre Plus.

A diverse range of Council Services are involved, including Education, Development, Community and Communications. Each partner brings talent and resources to assist the development of our economy and plan further support for the area.

In this update of *My Future's in Falkirk* we strive to reach higher, seeking to mobilise the local community, business and partner agencies to achieve our aspirations for the area.

In preparing this document we led several conversations, consulting with the business community, young people and the wider community across the Falkirk area. We have been supported in this through a longstanding relationship with the International Futures Forum, who challenge and guide us to look ahead. We have captured the results of these conversations and this is reflected in this document.

We want to build on the success of *My Future's in Falkirk*, engage more partners, renew our aspirations and mobilise efforts for the upward journey to regenerate our economy. This Way Forward document outlines the actions we will take to transform Falkirk's future and how we will engage people along the way.

"More businesses means more jobs, more people and more money in the area which we can use to make Falkirk look better"
Denny High School pupil

Our Progress

In the course of our journey we have made progress attaining a peak, with a range of projects that help in transforming the Falkirk area. Amongst our highlights are:

- The Falkirk Wheel became one of Scotland's most visited attractions with 500,000 people visiting annually
- Securing a £25 million award for the Helix from the Big Lottery Fund to transform 300 hectares of land between Falkirk and Grangemouth
- Establishing the 30 acre Earls Gate Park on reclaimed land at Kemfinc
- Creating the 33 acre Abbotsford Business Park on the site of the former Alcan works
- Building the Falkirk Community Stadium, with a mix of sports, commercial and community facilities
- Establishment of an e-skills academy at Forth Valley College
- Creating the Falkirk Business Panel, with 700 members from across the Falkirk area
- Commencing an innovative partnership between Ineos and Forth Valley College to create Modern Apprenticeships and "Engineers of the Future"
- Commencing the regeneration of Bo'ness with the Townscape Heritage Initiative including the restoration of the Hippodrome Cinema
- Reopening of the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals

- The redevelopment of Stenhousemuir town centre, creating a new civic and commercial heart in the town
- Winning the Scottish Business in the Community "Big Tick" award for business involvement in the community three times

These represent the first peak of achievement for our partnership and, while the economic downturn has since made a significant impact, the improvements in the Falkirk economy have been impressive:

- Between 1996 and 2006 our annual economic growth rate (3.2%) exceeded that of Scotland (2.7%)
- Our growth in services (62% over 10 years) helped diversify the economy from its traditional manufacturing base
- Our rate of job creation rose above the Scottish average
- Participation in our labour market, below the national average in 2002, rose and exceeded Scottish and UK averages for the 4 years to June 2008
- Our rate of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) dropped from 13.7% (2003) to 7.5% in 2008.
- Our business base grew by 23% in 10 years compared with 13% for Scotland as a whole and 20% for Great Britain (GB)
- Our population growth in Falkirk was above average (over 5% in the last decade)



- A visit by the International Futures Forum confirmed that the area is witnessing an impressive increase in its confidence, belief and aspirations

Local people and business have confirmed that Falkirk's prospects are improving:

- 92% of businesses agree Falkirk is a good place to do business
- 75% of local people say Falkirk is changing for the better
- 77% of young people are proud of the Falkirk area

"I don't think I've ever seen a more rich, successful, comprehensive, inclusive, exciting, imaginative, civic and community project in my whole career"
Maureen O'Hara
International Futures Forum

Our Strengths and Our Challenges

Our update of *My Future's in Falkirk* recognises that we operate in a global economy. This presents significant opportunities as well as challenges. We recognise that Falkirk businesses have to be innovative and competitive not only nationally but internationally. Our people must be skilled and equipped for a flexible and ever-changing labour market, with more varied concepts of a job, or career. We must exploit the strengths of our area, and address its challenges.

Our strengths include:

- Falkirk's central position in Scotland, its transport connections by motorway, sea and rail (passenger and freight) and proximity to airports
- An extensive and diverse business base, with strengths in petrochemicals, manufacturing and distribution
- Significant business land and property assets, including significant recent investment by the Council to modernise its stock
- Recognition by Scottish Government of the infrastructure needs of the Grangemouth area in the National Planning Framework 2 document
- Employability and skills of the local population, as demonstrated by a high rate of labour market participation
- Recognition of Falkirk as a major visitor location in Central Scotland with the establishment of the Falkirk Wheel, Callendar House, the Hippodrome Cinema

in Bo'ness, the World Heritage Site status for the Antonine Wall and the impending development of the Helix and its public art features, the 'Kelpies'.

- Quality of life and attractiveness of the area to live in, evidenced by population growth, house building and a range of surveys
- Improving quality of our public realm and community facilities - e.g. new general hospital, new schools, town centres and other regeneration sites
- The strength of our community spirit – Falkirk features amongst the top ten "happiest places to live" in the UK
- Falkirk town centre features in the top-ten customer friendliest centres in the UK.
- The cohesion of our partnerships, in particular the strong bond established between the private and public sectors to take forward the *My Future's in Falkirk* initiative

Some of the challenges facing our economy include:

- The global economic challenge, with increased competition and worldwide trading
- Climate change and the need to adopt more sustainable models of business activity and development
- Demographic changes – while the area's population grows it is also ageing with forecasts of a 35% growth in the population aged 65+ between 2006 and 2021

- Service sector productivity is lower than in Scotland and GB (Falkirk £27,500 per employee, GB over £35,000)
- The Falkirk business base is 30% lower (per 1000 population) than Scotland overall and 42% lower than GB
- Household income is below the Scottish average
- The economic downturn has seen unemployment rise to 4.4%, impacting particularly on young people
- The recession has caused a sharp decline in construction activity, land values and new investment
- We face strong competition for investment in our area and public expenditure constraints limit the Council's capacity for support
- Attainment levels are below the Scottish average for higher level qualifications, however recent results show improvement
- Despite our excellent location we face significant access constraints at key locations



"There are a lot of good things going on in Falkirk – we need to tell people about the good"
Graeme High School pupil



"The economy that recovers may not be the same as the one that crashed"
International Futures Forum

Our Ambition

“The next mountain is one that people clearly want to take on”
International Futures Forum

The future is something we create... and in Falkirk we seek to attain the peak of ambition. Through *My Future's in Falkirk* we will encourage our young people, residents and businesses to raise their sights and set their ambitions high too. We want to create a Falkirk which is the place to be in the third millennium; a place transformed, with a vibrant, powerful economy, with a future in which all can play their part. We aim to be active in our own future, with the Falkirk area recognised as:

- a place which is a dynamic business-friendly hub, serving Central Scotland and beyond
- a place where business can innovate, grow and prosper
- a place where young people can realise their fullest potential
- a place open to new and emerging possibilities in the global economy
- a place transformed, with strong, vibrant and sustainable communities
- having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition nationally and internationally
- a great place to live, work, visit and invest

My Future's in Falkirk has been developed through close involvement of the business community and public sector. We understand our strengths, the challenges we face and the efforts required to attain the next peak for our ambitions. This is demonstrated in figure 1.

The Falkirk Journey

Our approach on this journey is cohesive, coherent, collaborative and focussed on the future. Our strategy is firmly rooted in our efforts and desire to transform the prospects for the area and realise its fullest potential. We must be flexible and responsive to change, grasping opportunities we encounter. To achieve this will require sustained effort from public and private sector partners:

- to grow business and employment opportunity in the Falkirk area
 - enhancing business locations and
 - creating a business-friendly environment with strong networks of support for business
 - equipping people with skills to meet business needs
- to enhance business connections
 - improving access to opportunities for business in Falkirk and across Central Scotland
 - promoting our message nationally and internationally
- to transform our communities
 - creating new zones for investment
 - regenerating key centres and locations
 - creating visitor attractions and attracting tourists to our area

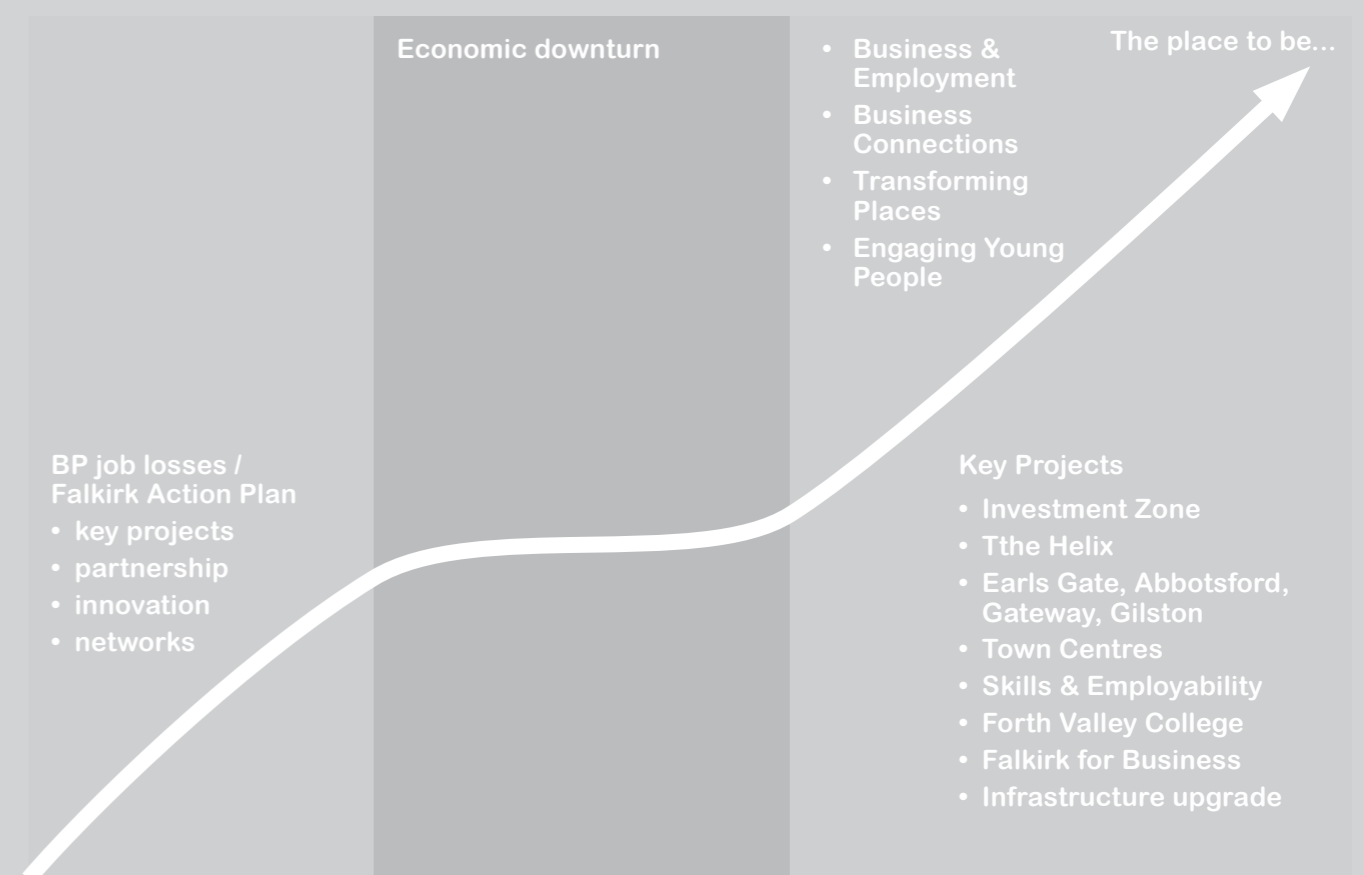
- to engage young people in realising their potential
 - enabling them to make connections
 - raising their aspirations and encouraging their ambition to succeed
 - creating more choices and more chances for their future

We want others to join in our journey, encouraging them to contribute actively to the area's development and growth and sharing in the vision and ambition for Falkirk. We want to equip people to achieve more, in their own career, for their young people, in business and for their community.

We will take this forward through the close involvement of our partners and by initiating a series of actions, in the form of projects which will help transform the area, including activities to engage people in our actions.

“People need to get out of their comfort zones if we are to realise our aspirations”
Business Panel member

Figure 1: The Falkirk Journey



Pursuing Our Actions

We will pursue the following projects and activities to deliver our vision and realise our ambitions for the Falkirk area:

Growing Business and Employment

The wealth and prosperity of Falkirk depends on attracting investment, growing the business base, and maximising the job opportunities available locally. Businesses are the principal creators of jobs. We must ensure we have excellent locations and create the ideal environment for business to prosper. We need a support network which promotes enterprise and fosters growth potential. We must exploit opportunity in growth sectors and in our key strengths of petro-chemicals, distribution and manufacturing.

The Falkirk Business Panel, with over 700 business members, is a key contributor to the work of *My Future's in Falkirk* and shares its ambitions. Through the Business Panel local companies connect with each other, with the Council, Schools, College and other partners and are actively engaged in developing the economy.

The labour market is changing, with radical shifts in job demands and opportunities to secure employment. We want local people (particularly our young people) to have the skills and ambition to gain employment locally, progress in their careers and fulfil their potential.

a) Business Locations

- to enhance the supply of business land and property to meet market opportunities. We aim to deliver new business locations through:

- Creating a new Falkirk-Grangemouth Investment Zone
- Developing Abbotsford Business Park
- Expansion of Earls Gate Business Park
- Promoting Glenbervie Business Park and Central Park, Larbert
- Promoting a new business park at Gilston
- Implementing Falkirk Council's Portfolio Management Plan e.g. with projects at Winchester Avenue, Denny and Central Park, Larbert
- Completion of Wholeflats Business Park, Grangemouth
- Progressing the Falkirk Gateway, a major business park, retail and leisure development
- Engaging with Scottish Development International to attract investment from overseas
- Promoting more sustainable business locations

b) Business Support

- we aim to create the ideal environment for business. We will develop our network of support for local business to access training, advice and financial support to start-up, grow and to create employment:

- Developing our new business support organisation – Falkirk for Business
- Delivery of business support activities including the Business Gateway
- Supporting local businesses to internationalise by accessing export markets
- Boosting performance in key sectors, particularly to promote the local petro-chemicals sector, distribution and the potential of environmental technologies
- Developing the local Business Panel
- Developing local supply chains
- Promoting the interests of the local retail sector
- Promoting business innovation, efficiency and competitiveness

c) Skills Support

- we want local people to secure positive work options, creating a network of guidance and support for people to develop their skills, access employment and fulfil their potential by:

- Developing the Forth Valley College Campus in Falkirk
- Enabling employers to secure a workforce that is flexible, job-ready, motivated and ambitious to succeed
- Boosting the level of work based training opportunities
- Creating better access to employment through enhanced and streamlined services
- Ensuring local unemployed people can access opportunities to enhance their employability

As an outcome of this work we expect:

- Increased business space and uptake of business premises
- A boost to the number and rate of new businesses formed
- A boost to the business stock in priority sectors e.g. petro-chemicals, distribution, and manufacturing
- Reduced number of unemployed people relative to Scotland

“Science based companies in Falkirk can impact the area, the rest of Scotland and even the world”
Stenhousemuir Primary School pupil



- Increased satisfaction rate in Falkirk as a place to do business
- Increased percentage of working age people receiving job related training
- Enhanced reputation as the most business friendly place in UK
- Enhanced international reputation linked to increased inward investment

“Enterprising activity... will be the route to future prosperity”
Business Panel member

“Further developing the infrastructure is key to our success”
Business Panel member

Developing Business Connections

One of the Falkirk area’s clearest advantages is its location in the central belt of Scotland. We are equidistant from Edinburgh and Glasgow and at the intersection of east-west and north-south communications. We have Scotland’s largest container port, a gateway to the rest of the world for its international trade.

These advantages have helped develop our logistics, manufacturing and service industry activities. Our location offers potential for further and more sustainable growth and is attractive to businesses which need ready access to their markets. We want to exploit the environmental benefits of the multi-modal transport connections that are possible in the Falkirk area. However, our networks have reached capacity at key points and need to be enhanced to support these opportunities.

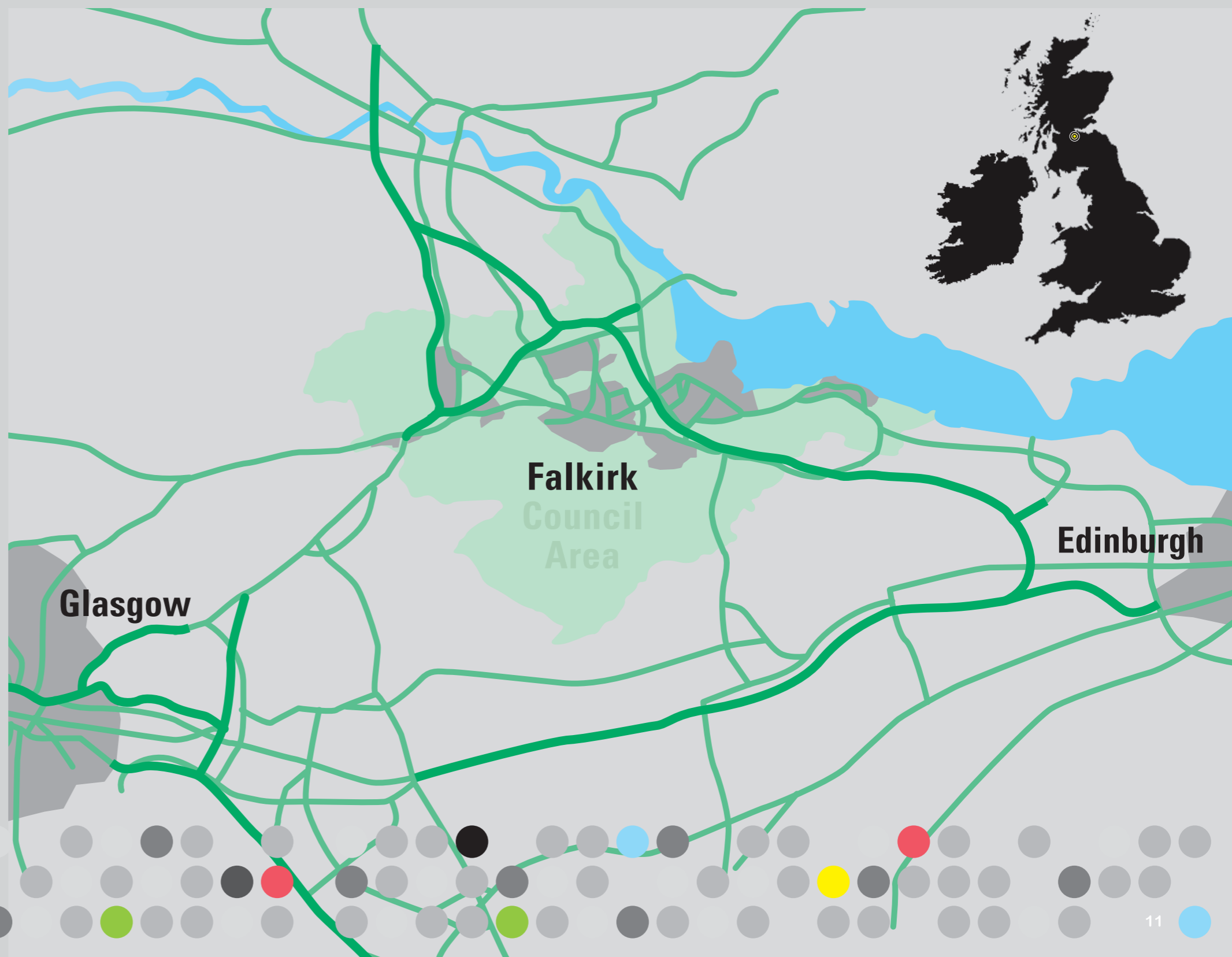
The Scottish Government’s National Planning Framework 2 and Transport Strategy recognise the need to address transport constraints in the Falkirk area and the potential this offers for the national economy. Priorities include access to Grangemouth Port (from M9 and via Avon Gorge), completion of the Glenbervie M876 junction and rail electrification to enhance the speed and capacity of the network.

Through *My Future’s in Falkirk*, we aim to improve access in the Falkirk area for the benefit of local businesses, their customers, suppliers, employees and visitors by:

- Improving the infrastructure serving the Grangemouth petrochemical and freight hub and wider investment zone
- Attracting investment in motorway connections and road corridors
- Progressing a masterplan for the Grangemouth Port
- Seeking improved rail connections for passengers and freight, exploiting Falkirk’s central position on the national rail network
- Enhancing local public transport hubs, services and connections
- Developing opportunities for digital communications and networks

As an outcome of this work we expect:

- Investment in improved access across the Falkirk area
- Increased freight usage, particularly using rail transport
- Increased access to digital networks



Transforming Places

The communities in the Falkirk area are solid and have a strong industrial heritage. Many older industrial sites have been put to new uses.

Plans are also in place to regenerate key locations and to exploit the potential for growth, creating new sustainable settlements, using iconic design which signals the transformation we promote. Our approach is based on close engagement with local communities to design, develop and contribute to the renewal and transformation in each location.

We aim to transform the sense of place, sustainability and quality of environment across the Falkirk area, creating new locations and enhancing the experience for those living and working in, or visiting, the area by encouraging private sector investment in residential and commercial development, in tourism attractions and our town centres including:

- Progressing major regeneration projects at Falkirk Gateway and Tamfourhill
- Stimulating residential-led regeneration at locations such as Whitecross, Banknock and former secondary school sites

a) Town Centres

Town centre regeneration is a key element of the *My Future's in Falkirk* initiative. Our town centres play a vital part in their local communities and must be supported to maintain this role in

the future. The process of change has started in each of our centres and we will sustain our efforts to secure their renewal by:

- Completing town centre regeneration in Stenhousemuir, Bo'ness, Grangemouth and Denny
- Developing a strategy to enhance and develop Falkirk Town Centre
- Enhancing the management and performance of local town and village centres

b) The Helix

The Helix, an exciting initiative, located between Falkirk and Grangemouth is a symbol of our commitment to transformation and central to our zone of investment. It will bring together the communities of Falkirk and Grangemouth to create a sustainable new environment, attracting visitors from across the world. We will:

- Establish the Helix – a massive 300 hectare land renewal scheme
- Create a new urban greenspace with attractions for communities and visitors to the area
- Generate opportunities for training, enterprise, culture and public art

c) Tourism

We are transforming Falkirk's status as a tourist location, creating new visitor attractions and enhancing the area's reputation as a place to visit, stay and play. We will:

- Enhance the range of tourist attractions in the area and exploit the potential of this key sector



- Promote the contribution of cultural, heritage and tourism assets including Callendar House and Park and the Antonine Wall
- Develop a tourism action plan with our partners
- Exploit the visitor potential of key attractions including the Falkirk Wheel, Callendar House, the Hippodrome and the Antonine Wall

As an outcome of this work we expect:

- Greater community ownership and pride in the Falkirk area
- Increased attraction from investors
- Increased visitor numbers and expenditure
- A boost to the footfall in our town centres
- Upgraded quality of premises in our town centres
- Improved satisfaction levels in our town centres
- Development of vacant sites



“We need to stop people just passing through Falkirk”
Graeme High School pupil

“In the future there will be plenty of ‘work’, but it is less likely to be neatly packaged into ‘jobs’ and stable ‘careers’.”
International Futures Forum

“More businesses impact on green issues and the number of people living in the area as well as tourism, so we need to balance all factors”
Graeme High School pupil

Engaging Young People

Young people are a vital element of the regeneration and future of any area. Engaging and involving them is a fundamental part of *My Future's in Falkirk*. This will assist them to move forward, build links with local employers and connect them to opportunities in their own community and further afield.

Creating more choices for young people and more chances for them to connect with the labour market to access skills and experience will aid their career prospects, presenting school leavers with positive options and destinations. It will also benefit local employers in gaining a new, energetic and skilled workforce, ready to meet the challenges of the global economy. By “Backing Falkirk’s Future” we will create new opportunities for business and young people to engage and work together.

By focussing on key sectors such as the creative industries and science and technology, *My Future's in Falkirk* aims to inspire, engage and alert young people to the opportunities available to them in the local area. We want to promote partnerships with schools, engaging young people and their teachers in the initiative. We want to help young people to explore opportunities in the local area and beyond. This will arm young people not only with knowledge about their area but also the confidence that they can play a key role in its future.

a) Making the Connections

- we aim to promote ambition and high aspirations for our young people involving them in the following:

- Business and Education links – we want our young people to be determined to succeed. To this end we will create opportunities for young people and business to work together and learn about career prospects in the area. We will support the development of a curriculum for excellence and encourage all schools to reflect *My Future's in Falkirk* messages when planning experiences and outcomes for our young people
- Arts, Culture and Creative industries – opportunities for young people to learn about prospects in the creative sector
- Science and Technology – helping young people learn about careers in science and technology, including opportunities in the Grangemouth petrochemicals sector
- Community and Environment – engaging young people in their local environment and the employment opportunities it can present, building a sense of pride in their area
- Marketing and Communications – improving young people's perceptions of the Falkirk area and involving them in projects to learn about the economy of the Falkirk area

b) Creating More Choices and More Chances

– we aim to offer all young people the opportunity to connect with the labour market, gain employability skills and experience that will serve them as their career develops:

- Implementing our More Choices, More Chances Action Plan to reduce the level of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Promoting “Backing Falkirk’s Future” – an initiative amongst employers to offer training, work placement and experiences for young people in the workplace.
- Implementing new models to secure options for young people leaving school
- Promoting Positive Transitions for young people in their final year of compulsory education
- Developing work-based learning opportunities for young people
- Engaging employers in providing training opportunities for young people

As an outcome of this work we expect:

- More school leavers in a positive destination
- Reduced numbers of 16-19 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Increased uptake of work based training
- Increased percentage of working age population with SVQ3 or above

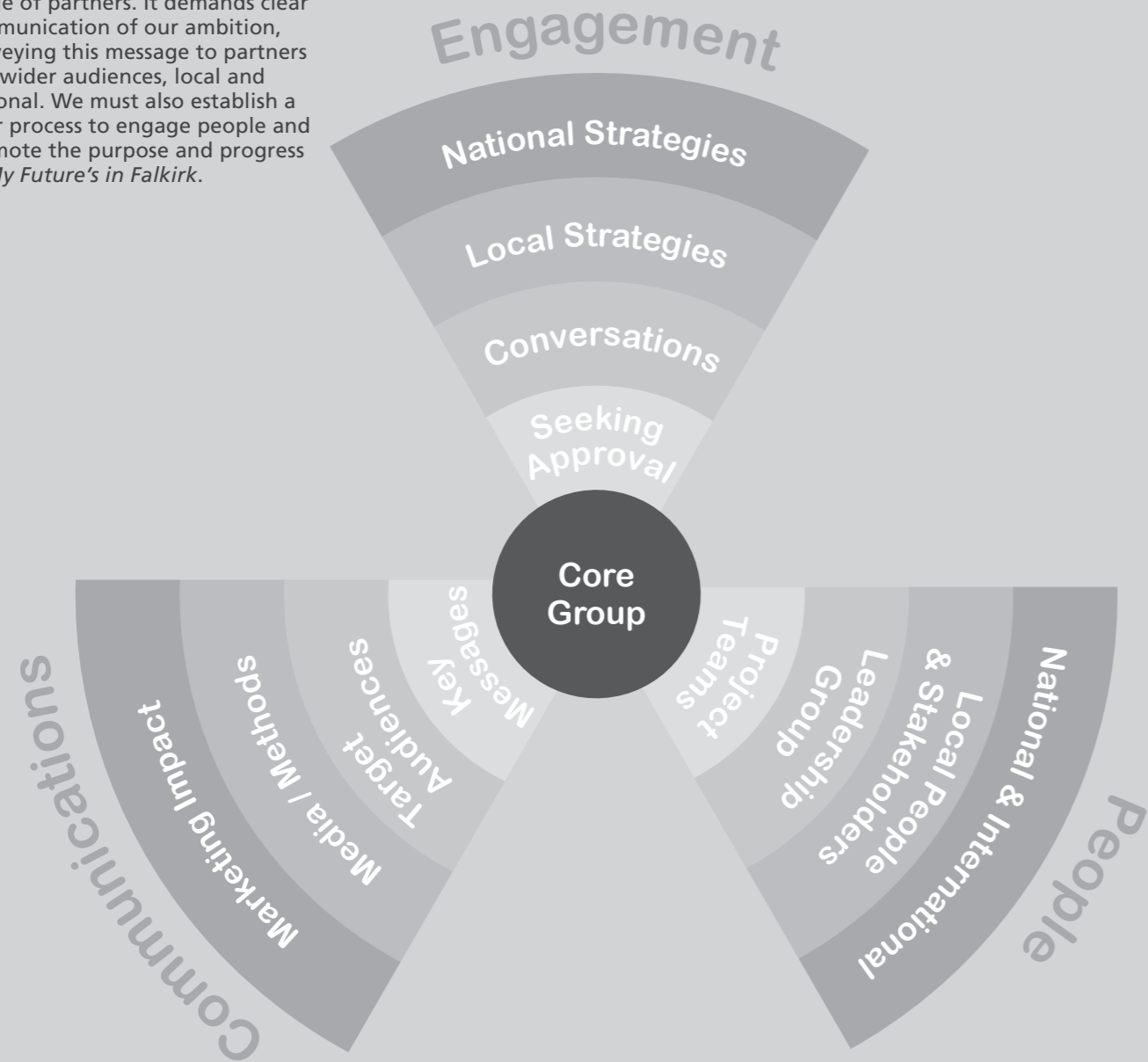
- Young people to have a stronger belief in themselves and increased expectations about their prospects.
- Young people to have a positive perception of the Falkirk area
- Young people to help promote their area



Delivering My Future's in Falkirk

My Future's in Falkirk's success depends on the support and involvement of people from a wide range of partners. It demands clear communication of our ambition, conveying this message to partners and wider audiences, local and national. We must also establish a clear process to engage people and promote the purpose and progress of My Future's in Falkirk.

Figure 2: Working Together



Partnership

Our partnership has experienced major change. Since the partnership was set up, Scottish Enterprise has restructured, BP has transferred its refinery and chemicals business to Ineos, Skills Development Scotland has been formed and the Business Gateway and local regeneration functions have transferred to Falkirk Council. The Strategic Community Plan has also been updated and a Single Outcome Agreement established. These link our work locally with the wider national agenda and help set the context for our actions.

The approach of our partnership has been updated in light of these major changes. In updating *My Future's in Falkirk* we are setting a new framework for partnership, involving new partners and enabling all to play their part.



Marketing and Promotion

In our consultations to date there is clear support for promoting the Falkirk area to a range of audiences, including local, national and international. Marketing and promotion is integral to the success of a range of activities such as attracting inward investment and building the confidence and the aspirations of our communities.

We want to demonstrate that Falkirk is changing for the better, highlighting the opportunities offered by a location that is ideal for business. We want to involve local people in the area's transformation. To convey our message we will:

- Redesign the *My Future's in Falkirk* website
- Develop promotional materials to highlight investment opportunities in the Falkirk area
- Develop a tourism marketing campaign to promote Falkirk as a visitor destination
- Target specific media to showcase opportunities and the progress being made by people, business and the wider community in Falkirk
- Connect more frequently with business, young people and the wider community
- Signpost projects and events through a regular e-newsletter

Supporting Delivery

We will mobilise and steer our efforts in delivering *My Future's in Falkirk* through a "core" group of partners and a wider leadership group involving key business and partner organisations. Project teams will be established to implement key projects. The core group will meet regularly to ensure the initiative is focussed on our ambitions and that the collective effort of partners is mobilised to:

- Attract resources and pledges of support to help carry forward our programme of work
- Engage partners, local business, young people and the community in this work
- Initiate the programme of actions
- Receive progress and performance reports from project teams
- Report progress widely through an annual report

The wider stakeholder group will connect with the work of the Business Panel's Leadership group, the Community Plan Management group and other partnerships and will assist in shaping and influencing the work to support the implementation of the initiative. We will also maintain our liaison with the International Futures Forum to support and guide our work. Importantly we will engage communities across the Falkirk area (including business and young people) in work to raise the ambition for Falkirk and participate in its future.

"We have to allow people the excitement that comes with a shift in the way of thinking. We can't just tell them what to do"

Business Panel member



The Next Steps

The success of *My Future's in Falkirk* rests in the support and commitment of partners and in our collective effort and actions to realise our ambitions. This framework identifies the way forward and seeks their support to progress these efforts. The arrangements for partnership, implementation, project management and monitoring will be developed to maintain agreement on the way forward.

This document is a starting point for further engagement in this initiative. It is being made available through the *My Future's in Falkirk* website and an invitation will be issued to our partners, businesses, the wider community and young people to work with us to raise the ambitions for the area and help progress *My Future's in Falkirk*.



www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk

