

EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLAN 2015-2030

Economy and Skills Delivery Plan 2024-2027

Year Two Annual Performance Update - 2025/26



**EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLAN 2015-2030
ECONOMY AND SKILLS DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2027
PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS**

PRIORITY 1: GROWTH		
Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
1.1: Supporting Inclusive Economic Growth through delivery of the Ayrshire Economic Strategy		
Provide a range of supports to enable business growth and align educational provision with business needs.	- Continued support to businesses in key sectors via sector specific workstreams (including Food & Drink, Visitor Economy, Clean Growth, Digital and Aerospace). - Deliver an effective system of co-ordinated support across the region to help promote more business start-ups and expansion, including better access to funding and finance. Ayrshire Growth Deal - Ayrshire Manufacturing Investment Corridor (AMIC). Establishment of a Centre of Excellence with on-site support and start-up units to support existing or new businesses adopt advanced manufacturing technology within the food and drink sector. - Development of innovative new courses in growth areas including engineering, computing, digital, education and social care, which are linked to employers and developed with industry partners.	EAC; SE; AC; universities; VS; SDS. EAC; REP; SE. EAC; SE; Strathclyde University; AC; SDS. AC; EAC; SDS
- Led by the Ayrshire Economic Partnership, the regional sector workstreams continue to work together to drive economic renewal, build community wealth and lead the transition to Net Zero. Within food and drink, 5 new start food manufacturing businesses and 20 new start hospitality businesses were supported by East Ayrshire Council's Business Support Team during 2025/26. Grant funding of £123,000 was provided to 26 businesses across the sector. The Clean Growth workstream is currently being refreshed following the appointment of a new Chair from University of the West of Scotland and the group's first priority will be to deliver the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan. - East Ayrshire Council launched a new programme aimed at helping women to establish, develop and expand their business ideas. The Step Up: Women's Enterprise Pathway programme was launched with introductory sessions in Kilmarnock and Cumnock during November 2025 and involved workshops and networking sessions, giving them an introduction to both the Council's start up team and other related organisations. https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/womens-enterprise-encouraged-with-new-business-support-programme - East Ayrshire was well represented amongst the winners at the Ayrshire Business Awards, which were hosted by Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce in October 2025. The Killie Community won the Charity of the Year Award, Emergency One took away the Developing Ayrshire's Young Workforce Award and Scotia Windows and Doors secured the Digital Innovation Award. Business Awards Winners - Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry - East and North Ayrshire Councils agreed to progress with the development of a shared Economic Development service, with a single management team led by a Regional Economic Director and services located within each local authority. The shared service will be led by North		

Ayrshire Council, with effect from 1 June 2026. This new operating model will help both Councils plan for the longer-term deliverability of essential services and will fully support the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy. Importantly for staff and stakeholders, local presence and service delivery will continue in both North and East Ayrshire. While strategic leadership and planning will operate at a regional level, services will remain rooted in local communities—ensuring strong local knowledge, relationships and responsiveness are retained. [North and East Ayrshire Councils launch new Shared Economic Development Service | East Ayrshire Council News](#)

- Following the Scottish Government's decision to discontinue funding for Kilmarnock-based **Business Loans Scotland**, two staff members remain in place at the Ingram Enterprise Centre, where they will continue to collect repayments until 2029. East Ayrshire Council has drawn down its balance from BLS, which will be used to progress business development activities. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/cabinet-disappointment-as-business-loans-scotland-wraps-up>
- In 2025/26, the Council's Business Support Team supported the development of **289 new businesses in East Ayrshire**. It also provided growth grants to 26 businesses via the UKSPF, allowing them to make capital investments which would not otherwise have proceeded.



- Construction of the **Ayrshire Innovation Park**, at Moorfield, commenced in late 2025. The Park will host two AGD projects: AMIC and the Ayrshire Engineering Park. Works will be carried out on a phased basis over the next three years, the first of which is now underway, with the construction of a new spine road and two new junctions around the Moorfield site. Infrastructure works are expected to complete later in 2026. Construction of the industrial units and centre of excellence is expected to start in 2027. The construction phase will create 245 local jobs and a further 280 jobs will be created within the food, drink and engineering sectors. Interest in the site has been extremely positive with 3 out of 5 plots already under offer and currently progressing to conclusion of missives. [Construction at Ayrshire Innovation Park gets underway | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
- East Ayrshire Council launched a new vocational training programme as part of the AGD's ambitions to upskill residents in Cumnock and Doon Valley, enabling them to access employment in the emerging electric vehicle and hydrogen automotive sector. The pilot project is a key component of the **Community Renewable Energy project (CoRE)** which will develop new skills pathways in creating a pipeline of skilled individuals

aligned to the needs of local employers, who have identified a shortage of skills in this sector. Training sessions commenced in March 2026 at Emergency One in Cumnock, with 9 mechanics from local garages working alongside staff to gain accredited EV qualifications. [New vocational training launched for E V mechanics | East Ayrshire Council News](#)

- East Ayrshire secondary schools continue to offer a **range of curricular pathways** which include provision of industry accredited courses such as the level 5 SVQ in Performing Engineering Operations delivered in partnership with Ayrshire College. Collaboration with DYW Ayrshire in the continued development of Innovative Projects has enhanced the workplace learning offer to learners across East Ayrshire with activity focusing on a range of areas including Engineering, Construction, Rural Skills, Hospitality and Early Years. Scottish Government funding for DYW Coordinators continued in 2025/26 with designated staff in our seven secondary schools and Park School acting as direct links to local businesses, arranging industry talks, mock interviews and work experience.

- All secondary schools in East Ayrshire committed to the introduction of **Foundation Apprenticeships** in 2025/26 and each received £10,000 from the East Ayrshire Local Employability Partnership to support delivery, which was used to target participation in a range of sectors including engineering, hospitality, health and social care. The 2025/26 offer included the successful Food and Drink Technologies Programme at Loudoun Academy, the Social Services programme at Kilmarnock Academy and a specialised EV/Hydrogen pathway (aligned to the AGD CoRE project) at Robert Burns and Doon Academies. [EALEP Whitlee Apprenticeship Programme.pdf](#)
- In the 10th Annual **RTX Quadcopter Challenge National Final** held at London's Honourable Artillery Company, Kilmarnock Academy's Team KAPPAS was crowned the overall UK Champions. Responding to the 'Local Heroes' theme, the team designed and flew a custom quadcopter configured with innovative solutions to support local police work and theft prevention. The team beat a record 112 teams and 500 students nationwide, bringing home a £10,000 prize to fund and enhance Kilmarnock Academy's STEM programmes. They were mentored by engineering professionals from Collins Aerospace in Prestwick.
- St. Sophia's Primary School, Galston, integrated **robotic dogs** into its curriculum to focus pupils on STEM subjects. The robots have helped to spark pupil's curiosity in terms of hi-tech engineering and AI capabilities.
- The **Ayrshire College Foundation** agreed to fund two mixed reality visualisation suites at its Kilmarnock and Ayr campuses. These environments are specifically engineered to provide hands-on spatial training for the engineering, advanced manufacturing, construction, and care sectors.



Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Attract more private sector investment into East Ayrshire, providing projects that generate jobs and wealth for our communities.	• Implementation of Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2033. • Position East Ayrshire as a regionally and nationally significant destination for inward investment. • Regional Economic Partnership will provide voice for Ayrshire to press the case for government intervention and investment, incentives and other assistance.	EAC; REP; AC; SE. EAC; AC; SE. REP
• The Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy (ARES) Year 2 Delivery Plan actions focussed on a strategic shift towards fewer, higher-impact regional priorities, a reset of regional governance, and the addition of a new cross-cutting climate change framework. Building on the 46 original actions from Year 1, the Year 2 plan carried forward multi-year initiatives alongside new regional alignment tasks. This will provide a framework for a major three year strategic roadmap set for 2026-2029. • In preparation for the development of a new ARES 2026-29 Delivery Plan, preparatory work commenced in June 2025. This included a review of years 1 and 2, three stakeholder workshops and the development of a set of actions under each theme. Under the vision Ayrshire: Thriving Together, the six original themes have been conflated into three: Business/Economy, Place/Environment and People/Community. Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan 2026-29.pdf • Development of a new regional Inward Investment protocol by the three local authorities commenced in early 2026. This will form the framework that will govern how inward investment enquiries are received, assessed, progressed and managed. Aligned to the Regional Economic		

Strategy (RES), it will identify six priority sectors for inward investment activity: aerospace and space, green economy, digital and advanced manufacturing, food and drink, tourism/visitor economy and blue economy.

- Scottish Enterprise commissioned a study on behalf of the Regional Economic Partnership which will map **Regional Transformational Opportunities** in Ayrshire. This includes an analysis of key enablers and barriers, workforce and skills needs and alignment with the Regional Spatial Strategy. Workshops and consultation activity took place between January – March 2026, with a final report being completed in summer 2026. Outputs will be used to help inform future investment plans and priority actions for partnership working to realise and maximise opportunities.
- Funding was secured by the Regional Economic Partnership in March 2023 which will be used to take forward the development of a **regional intelligence hub**. An allocation of £50,000 was confirmed by the Scottish Government and this will be used to address a significant gap around access to economic data. Funding will be used to kick start an Ayrshire hub in partnership with the existing Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub. Longer term, the Hub will allow regional partners access to data and intelligence without reliance on commissioning consultants. This will support the development of business cases for AGD projects. [Scottish Government Capacity Funding to Regional Economic Growth Partnerships - Ayrshire Proposal.pdf](#)

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Support the growth of the visitor economy in East Ayrshire	• Work with partners to deliver the objectives of the Ayrshire and Our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 and to create a thriving and inclusive visitor economy. • Build pathways into the sector from schools and colleges to encourage young people to stay in our area and ensure a skilled workforce is in place.	VisitScotland; EAC; EALT; SE; Ayrshire CofC; Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance (AADA); Scottish Tourism Alliance. Visit Scotland; EAC; AC; SDS.
• Tourism representatives from across Ayrshire attended the VisitScotland Connect 2026, at Glasgow's SEC in April. The event was designed to help Scotland increase its share of global travel sustainably. It provided an important opportunity for the local tourism industry to meet face to face with global tour operators and travel agents to showcase Ayrshire's visitor offering. • In May 2025, the Scottish Government confirmed that it would not be taking forward proposals for a new Galloway National Park which would have included parts of East Ayrshire as well as South Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway. The decision was based on recommendations from the Reporter (NatureScot) and strong local opposition, particularly concerning economic activity and the complexity of the planning process. Partners are now focussing on alternative policy proposals for the area including the development of a new strategic plan and sustained investment in access and visitor management across the area. • In October 2025, following detailed consideration, East Ayrshire Council took the decision not to proceed with the introduction of a Visitor Levy. The new Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill grants councils the power to impose a tax on overnight accommodation. However, the relatively small size of the overnight hospitality sector in East Ayrshire coupled with the costs of setting up and administering a scheme would render any move to introduce a local Visitor Levy uneconomic in the current climate. The Council agreed to pause any further work on development of a levy until August 2027 until further evidence on the impact of the scheme in other areas and on the wider visitor economy are available. East Ayrshire says no thanks to Visitor Levy East Ayrshire Council News • A regional showcase event took place at Dean Castle Country Park, Kilmarnock in January 2026. This highlighted how the Ayrshire 5G Innovation Region Tourism Project uses advanced connectivity to optimise large-scale event planning, streamline hospitality operations, and enhance visitor experiences across the region.		

- A **strategic collaboration between the Ayrshire region and Glasgow City Council** saw a unified regional gateway approach being put in place, which is designed to capture international travel markets. This included a joint marketing campaign which focussed on Glasgow's urban heritage and Ayrshire's distinct offerings including food and drink, outdoor adventure and eco-tourism. Upgraded land and rail links were used to spread visitor density outward into this region.
- The East Ayrshire LEP continued to provide **support to the hospitality sector in Ayrshire, assisting unemployed residents into jobs**. Wider support was provided through employability partners, including Ayrshire College, who offer sector-based work academy activity and access to training linked to local vacancies. This provision is helping to ease recruitment pressures within the local hospitality sector and is creating clearer pathways for unemployed individuals to gain skills, experience and access hospitality positions.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
1.2: Growing the future workforce through skills and education reform		
Adapt the provision of employability services and provide re-training and upskilling opportunities for all our communities.	• Continue to review provision through the Local Employability Partnership to ensure that we continue to respond effectively to identified need. • Promote funded placements from externally funded sources including NOLB and SPF to maximise the number of people into sustainable employment, including Apprenticeships and Recruitment Incentive Grants. • Develop and implement targeted employability activity to engage economically inactive residents and support them into appropriate further learning, training or employment. • Provide lifeskills, learning and volunteering opportunities for local people to help them play an active and productive role in their personal, community, family and working lives.	EAC; DWP; SDS; SE; AC; Third Sector EAC; AC; SDS; EACVO; Third Sector EAC; AC; SDS EAC; AC
• Following a cross cutting review of employability service delivery across the Council, a new management and operational structure was introduced in 2025/26. Services previously undertaken jointly by Education and Economic Growth have been consolidated within the new Education and Skills Service, recognising the linkages to the existing Skills and Learning model within that service. The new combined service is being led by the Director of Education and Skills. Following the appointment of a new interim Employability Manager in July 2025 and in order to provide staff with job security, a revised staffing structure was implemented. Looking forward, all staff have a clear and shared vision for delivery of employability services in East Ayrshire via the well established 5 stage strategic skills pipeline. East Ayrshire brings Education and Business together to develop jobs and training opportunities for all East Ayrshire Council News • To complement the EALEP's Trusted Partner Procurement Framework, a Third Sector Challenge Fund was launched at public meetings in Kilmarnock, Cumnock, Galston and Dalmellington in October 2025. The fund is aimed at small grassroots organisations who can utilise their experience and expertise to deliver employability interventions appropriate to their local areas and priority groups facing barriers to labour market participation. It was made available to third sector providers with an annual income below £0.750m who were able to bid for a one-off grant payment of between £2,000 and £10,000. 11 projects were successfully funded. • Job Coaches continue to support clients with additional support needs using the 5 Stage Model from Stage 1 (engagement) through to Stage 5 (in work support). This is targeted at clients aged 16 or over who are unemployed, inactive or employed through a measure of in-house supports. Clients accessing this support can also access the offer of funded Accredited Training and Recruitment Incentive Grants.		

- The refurbished **Galston Town Hall and Library**, which incorporates a Skills and Learning hub to help residents find employment, was completed in March 2026. The facility was part-funded via the Shared Prosperity Fund and completes a network of local employability hubs across the local authority area along with existing facilities in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington.



- Eight interns became the first to graduate from **NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Skills Sector programme** in June 2025. The interns gained employability training and work experience in various departments at University Hospital Crosshouse such as support services, medical imaging and maternity. Two of the cohort have secured jobs as domestic assistants while the others are actively applying for positions within the organisation. The scheme, set up in collaboration with Ayrshire College and East Ayrshire Council, helps young people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions develop employment skills. [NHS Ayrshire & Arran congratulates Skills Sector graduates | Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald](#)
- **Public Health representation on the EALEP** provides opportunities to upskill employability partners in supporting client health and wellbeing whilst jobseeking through promotion of Staying Healthy While Out of Work and influencing and shaping actions regarding health and employability. Over the past year actions have included raising awareness of campaigns such as Challenge Poverty Week and Mental Health Awareness Week and opportunities to engage with training and resources such as Mentally Healthy Workplace Training for Managers and the Mentally Flourishing Workplace Framework. Public Health provide evidence based advice and

guidance on the preventive potential of a life course approach alongside promoting a focus on priority groups including the ageing workforce and the neurodivergent workforce. Through their involvement in the LEP, Public Health are able to provide a link with local businesses, sharing opportunities to participate in employability activity, while providing guidance at training and events for employers to promote workforce health and wellbeing and ensuring a safe and healthy working environment.

- In 2025, NHSAA's Workplace Health Team relaunched their **Staying Healthy While Out of Work** course, changing delivery from being delivered by the team directly to employability customers to a train the trainers version for employability staff. This relaunch aimed to build capacity and capability for delivery of the course and its messages, alongside increasing the knowledge and confidence of employability staff in discussing and delivering key health messages with their customers. The attendees received access to resources and support to promote health and wellbeing and were encouraged to adapt this to suit their customers' needs. Between April 2025 and March 2026, 77 employability staff from Ayrshire based services (including local authorities, DWP, CEIS and The Lennox Partnership) attended the Staying Healthy While Out of Work training.



- The annual '**Pathways to Careers**' event led by East Ayrshire Council's Education Service took place in Ayrshire College in February 2026. The Council's Employability team attended the event to provide guidance and advice to young people attending. With 60 employers in attendance, the event gave attendees the opportunity to engage directly with local and national employers and learn about career pathways, future opportunities and current vacancies within a range of industries. It was part of a broader regional initiative across Ayrshire College campuses in Ayr and Kilwinning.
- East Ayrshire Council approved a **Prison Based Employability Programme** in June 2025. The programme follows the highly effective evidence based Individual Place and Support (IPS) model and includes the creation of training assistant posts in the Council to give people work experience in services such as Housing and Communities, Facilities and Property Management and Ayrshire Roads Alliance. Building on, and integrated with, the well-established Inside Out Service, which is delivered by Recovery Enterprises Scotland the new programme aims to support 24 individuals every year for four years and will use funding from the Council's Jobs and Training Fund to support up to 12 people a year for four years via the Fresh Start Programme. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/moving-forward-to-a-positive-future-new-prison-based-employability-scheme-gets-go-ahead>
- During 2025/26, the **East Ayrshire Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) Fund** targeted person-centred assistance to help low income parents transition into sustainable employment, gain qualifications and combat child poverty.
- **No One Left Behind (NOLB)** funding supported 489 East Ayrshire participants during 2025/26. Of the 489 participants, 51 progressed into employment, 3 started their own business, 41 secured Modern Apprenticeship places and 54 moved into further education.
- UKSPF funding allowed the Council's Employability Team **to support 287 people into employment** (257 unemployed and 30 employed clients). Of the 257 unemployed clients, 101 of them were in employment following support (a further 118 are continuing to be supported to progress towards a positive destination). All 30 employed clients that were supported have sustained their employed status.
- Volunteering continues to play an important role in supporting health, wellbeing and community resilience across East Ayrshire. During 2025/26, collaborative working between NHSAA, third sector organisations and local partners has continued to expand opportunities for local people to contribute to their communities while developing confidence, skills and employability. A particular area of focus has been **volunteering opportunities within healthcare settings**, including at University Hospital Crosshouse and East Ayrshire Community Hospital. These opportunities support both patient wellbeing and workforce resilience across local services. Ward volunteer roles within NHS Ayrshire & Arran provide volunteers with opportunities to support patients, provide companionship, assist with recreational activities, create a welcoming and supportive environment and gain experience within healthcare and community care settings.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Expand provision of school, college and apprenticeship places to meet emerging demands in new and high-growth areas.	• Workforce Strategies. Enhanced focus on succession planning, including an increase in the numbers of apprenticeships. • Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships. Continue to develop bespoke Foundation Apprenticeship models, delivered in-house as part of senior phase curriculum in East Ayrshire Schools, that complement and enhance the existing college offer. Offer and ensure pathways to Modern Apprenticeships specifically highlighted as areas of significance for the Ayrshire region. Embed Graduate Apprenticeships within the core further and higher education curriculum offer. • Jobs & Training Fund. Identify opportunities and provide placements for apprentices within the Business, social enterprise and third sectors via the Council's Jobs and Training Fund, SPF and other funding arrangements.	ALL AC; SDS; EAC EAC; SDS
• The East Ayrshire LEP co-ordinated the delivery of Year 1 of the Whitelee Skills and Employability Programme in 2025/26. The programme offers tailored support packages to industries and employers with job vacancies. Targeted at AGD growth sectors, this included high quality training to prepare participants for the future demands of East Ayrshire's workforce, ensuring a steady influx of skilled labour into the region. 23 apprenticeships and 15 Graduate Apprenticeships/career changers were created in 2025/26. • Across June and July 2025, Doon Academy delivered an innovative pre- apprenticeship programme. 14 young people participated with 13 completing the programme. 9 young people subsequently attended interviews for Modern Apprenticeship posts within their chosen sector areas. Of this cohort, 6 were successful in gaining MA roles across East Ayrshire Leisure, Greener Communities, Education Early Years and Education Pupil Support. The school were delighted at the success of the programme and its impact on the young people involved.		
 • In November 2025, East Ayrshire Council held its annual Modern Apprentice Certification event to recognise the achievements of the 39 young people who had gained qualifications during the year. They received qualifications in Business Administration, IT, Trade Apprenticeships, Horticulture, Customer Service and Social Care and Health. • East Ayrshire Council delivered an Introduction to Outdoor Amenities Programme targeted at young people and parents which consisted of 8 weeks of work experience led by the Horticulture team. The programme supported participants to develop the skills and knowledge required to work within the sector and 3 participants secured employment upon completion. • The annual school leavers' Summer Programme took place, with 54 young people at high risk of disengagement taking part. A partnership between East Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire College, Enable Scotland and NHS Salus, participants were able to gain various accreditation levels. 38 young people achieved SQA qualifications and 16 achieved Food Hygiene Awards. Of the 54 participants, 8 progressed into further education, 4 moved directly into employment and 22 are participating in further training.		

- Ayrshire College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Franchise Agreement with **Energy Innovation**, strengthening collaboration on skills, training and education to support the continued growth of the offshore wind sector in Scotland, the UK and internationally. The partnership will focus on developing high-quality training pathways for wind technicians, including Global Wind Organisation (GWO) accredited training, technician education and wider competence development. It will strengthen links between industry requirements and curriculum-based provision, supporting workforce readiness across offshore and onshore wind. [Ayrshire College partners with Energy Innovation to expand offshore wind training in Scotland | Ayrshire College](#)
- Via the Regional Skills Group, each of the three Ayrshire local authorities commissioned their own **skills and recruitment surveys** during 2025/26. Targeted at local businesses, they were designed to find out more about recruitment intentions and skills shortages over the short, medium and long term across the manufacturing, construction, engineering, hospitality and retail sectors. Currently, there is an estimated 1,749 vacancies across the region, with an additional training requirement for 4,917 staff. [EALP Whitlee Apprenticeship Programme.pdf](#)
- An initiative between the **9CC Group**, the charitable organisation co-ordinating windfarm benefit funds across nine East Ayrshire communities, the LEP and **Emergency One**, the UK's leading manufacturer of specialist fire and rescue service appliances, has provided more than £1.5 million funding over five years for 20 trade apprentices with 12 apprentices in 2024/25 and a further 8 in 2025/26.
- Between April 2025 and March 2026, 40 trainees were appointed to posts within East Ayrshire Council via the Jobs and Training Fund (33 Modern Apprentices and 7 Graduate Interns). Through the Economic Development Recruitment Incentive Grant (RIG), a further 29 Modern Apprentices and 6 Graduate Interns were appointed to posts within local businesses. In total, 75 young people were recruited during 2025/26 using these funds/grants.



- East Ayrshire Council and the EA Health & Social Care Partnership developed a **Modern Apprentice Programme focused on Health and Social Care**. As a result, during 2025/26 7 young people were recruited to this 2-year programme. All have started a Social Services and Health Care qualification and are progressing well through the first year of their apprenticeship.
- To commemorate **International Women's Day 2026** in March, East Ayrshire Council hosted an event for employees and local school pupils at SL33 featuring female guest speakers from traditionally male dominated environments (football, engineering and health and nutrition). Employability workshops were held including interview training, health checks and spa treatments delivered by SL33 trainees. The event also featured a marketplace with stalls featuring local businesses. Speakers at the event included Rose Reilly, former Italian international footballer, Barbara McIntyre, Scottish Engineering Director and Ayesha Shahid, Nutrition and Lifestyle Coach.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
1.3: Building community wealth		
Enable local businesses to take advantage of public sector procurement opportunities, helping to increase their competitiveness nationally and internationally.	• Ayrshire Growth Deal Community Wealth Building (CWB) Project. The Business Supplier Development programme aligned to CWB continues to focus on supporting local enterprises to tackle barriers (such as lack of tender experience and capacity) to securing contracts with anchor institutions. • Support inclusive growth by harnessing CPP (anchor organisation) spending power in terms of buying from local or socially progressive businesses. • Exploration of collaborative and joint capital funding ventures across the CPP.	EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO. ALL ALL
 2025-26 Update • East Ayrshire Council is an active corporate member of the Supplier Development Programme (SDP), a free business support initiative that helps, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises become tender ready for public sector contracts. Specialist support is aligned to help local firms bid for projects funded by the AGD. Regular 'Meet the Buyer' events are held in conjunction with the two other local authorities in Ayrshire and a major event took place in Kilmarnock's Park Hotel in November 2025. • The pan-Ayrshire CWB programme concluded in March 2025. An evaluation highlighted that it exceeded many key targets: 1,152 enterprises received direct support (25% higher than target); 1,027 jobs were safeguarded across the region; 286 businesses secured grants or specialised consultancy support. The programme directly informed the development of Scotland's CWB Bill, which mandates Scottish local authorities to embed CWB practices into core operations, as has happened in Ayrshire. • CPP partners have endorsed a commitment to support local businesses via supply chain contracts. Our collective activities will seek to prioritise and extend every opportunity to strengthen Net Zero, local value and the just transition. In doing so, anchor institutions are optimising collaborative opportunities which makes it easier for local and smaller businesses to bid for contracts. • NHS Ayrshire and Arran Procurement and Public Health staff attended both national and local Meet the Buyer events, where they highlighted upcoming contract opportunities, outlined procurement processes, and promoted the NHS Community Benefit Gateway (CBG). The CBG was also promoted during Ayrshire Chamber's Business-to-Business Week, held in Kilmarnock in October 2025. Case study examples of successful bids have been added to the Community Benefit Gateway – NHS Ayrshire & Arran webpage and further showcased through social media. This resulted in three applications to the CBG from East Ayrshire charities and community groups.		

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Work with employers to ensure that opportunities created locally adhere to the principles of Fair Work, including payment of the Living Wage and high standards.	Following a mid-term review, the Community Wealth Building project has been extended by one year to March 2025, recognising the achievements of the programme and the need for continued delivery. Funding in future years will be supported by SPF. Post 2025, the Regional Economic Strategy sets out the need for a mainstreaming approach which would contribute towards the achievement of a wellbeing economy for Ayrshire.	EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO.
- The Community Wealth Building programme officially concluded in March 2025. Each of the three Ayrshire local authorities, along with other anchor institutions, have sought to integrate CWB principles into their mainstream frontline business and economic support services. The programme was selected to be showcased at the Just Transition Summit in Edinburgh in October 2025. - CPP partners lead by example within their own internal workforce strategies by actively reducing temporary and bank contracts in favour of permanent, substantive positions; by maintaining institutional channels for collective bargaining, union access and employee engagement; and by holding accreditations such as Living Wage and Carer Positive Employers, setting a benchmark for the private sector.		

PRIORITY 2: FAIRNESS		
Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
2.1: Promoting equity and inclusion across the life cycle		
Support social enterprises and the third sector to provide facilities and employment, and deliver inclusive growth.	- Improved support for the third sector to deliver community wealth via the development of social, family owned and employee-owned and co-operative enterprises and the promotion of opportunities for employee ownership. - The creation of a strengthened network of employability hubs in Kilmarnock, Cumnock, Dalmellington and Darvel will provide additional facilities for social enterprises to work with young people.	EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO. EAC; EACVO.
Development of the new Galston employability hub was completed in March 2026 and the new facility officially opens in April 2026, as part of a multi-use development at the refurbished Galston Town Hall and Library. The Skills and Learning hub will support individuals gain the skills to progress into work and learning. The facility is based on the model of SL33, offering a one-stop-shop to streamline communication and referrals and eradicate duplication. Specific service delivery includes bespoke support for school leavers, support for care-experienced clients, a sector skills programme for clients of all ages with disabilities and parental employability programmes.		

- The **SL99 hub in Dalmellington** delivered integrated skills training for clients from across the Doon Valley during 2025/26. SL99 offers a person-centred, all age framework, offering practical, vocational pathways including barista training, customer service, HGV training and first aid. It also works in conjunction with the EA Parental Employability Support Fund to help parents balance entering the workforce with childcare challenges.



Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Invest in new, sustainable transport infrastructure that improves the transport network and accessibility, particularly in our rural communities.	• Delivery of the Active Travel Strategy (2022-32), identifying and delivering improvements for journeys undertaken in East Ayrshire by walking and cycling. • Ayrshire Growth Deal – all projects. Creation of low carbon solutions for transport and active travel connections, including new cycle routes and paths. • Continue to make the case for infrastructure investment at Bellfield Interchange, recognising its strategic importance to the long-term economic regeneration of East Ayrshire and the wider region.	ARA; EAC; SPT; EALT EAC; ARA; EALT; community groups. EAC; ARA; Transport Scotland
• The East Ayrshire Active Travel Strategy is currently undergoing a bi-annual refresh. Currently in draft format, it was subject to a public consultation which ran from 2 February – 1 March 2026. • Ongoing delivery of actions within the NHS Ayrshire & Arran Sustainable Travel Action Plan including the placement of an Active and Sustainable Travel Intern embedded within the NHS, funded via Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) and managed by Bright Green Business (Jan 2025 - Oct 2025); 7 sites with Cycle Friendly Employer Award (one CFE Plus), including University Hospital Crosshouse (UHC) and East Ayrshire Community Hospital; active travel promoted with all new staff at NHS A&A Corporate Induction by ARA Intern/Travel Smart Officer (over 700 engagements Jan – Oct 2025); production of a new staff booklet promoting Active & Sustainable Travel; NHSAA have been awarded the 'Walking Workplaces Award by Walking Scotland; Bike Week June 2025 – Workplace challenge offered across all NHS sites and information stalls across many sites in conjunction with the ARA Intern and with North Ayrshire Council Travel smart officer (52 staff engaged); VIVA engage AA Walking, wheeling and cycling user group (119 staff members) - promote regular campaigns, concessionary travel and local activity supporting active and sustainable travel to staff. • The Ayrshire Roads Alliance continued its work on the development of the Ayrshire Link, which will see the establishment of a comprehensive and accessible network of trails from Lugton to Girvan, featuring 15 different routes in various stages of planning and development. The Ayrshire		

Link will comprise over 100 miles of new active travel routes across the region as part of a pioneering effort to encourage sustainable and healthy modes of transportation. [Home – The Ayrshire Link](#)

- Through its membership of SPT, East Ayrshire Council agreed the **Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy** in December 2025. The Strategy aims to deliver more frequent, reliable bus services, improve affordability and simplify fares. In particular, it will provide an opportunity to strengthen links across the rural areas of East Ayrshire. As the strategy develops into a delivery plan, officers will continue to engage to maximise the opportunities to integrate activity with current workstreams and local aspirations.



- Ayrshire Roads Alliance secured funding that allowed them to complete the detailed design of the **Kilmarnock Infinity Loop** routes 1A (north of the viaduct) and route 2 (in full). Further applications will be submitted to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund in 2026/27 to carry out the detailed design of routes 1B and 3.
- East Ayrshire Council is currently carrying out a review of its **transport needs**, which will include a revised approach to delivery. With current Alternative School Transport contracts due to end in June 2027, a replacement procurement exercise will commence during 2026/27. To support the most efficient and effective provision, the Council intends to purchase a small fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles and standard minibus vehicles. This work is being taken forward via a Strategic Transport Review Group.
- Via the CoRE project a **community electric car club** will be established in partnership with Coalfields Community Transport to help rural and deprived

communities to become better connected and to increase accessibility to essential services. A wheelchair accessible vehicle has also been incorporated to enable volunteer drivers and carers to transport disabled individuals. A digital booking app has been developed to facilitate integrated surveys, vehicle tracking and collection of demographic information, to understand the demand, drivers and barriers to EV uptake locally. The vehicles have been purchased and are awaiting their livery installation. A number of community events will take place to promote the car club prior to an official launch event being scheduled.

- CoRE will also establish an **inclusive electric bike club** to enable disabled individuals to participate in a form of active travel which would otherwise be inaccessible. The e-bikes purchased are specially adapted to meet participant's mobility and disability needs, with the electric assistance allowing for longer rides without physical strain. The physical and mental health and wellbeing impacts on participants will be monitored. Ayrshire 360 are the delivery partner for the project with the initial sessions being delivered at Hillside School as a precursor to full roll out within the community.
- The **Ayrshire Innovation Park (AIP)** at Moorfield in Kilmarnock is currently integrating a modern active travel network into its core infrastructure to provide dedicated, vehicle-free walking, wheeling, and cycling routes for commuting and recreation. Spearheaded by the Ayrshire Roads Alliance under East Ayrshire's regional Masterplan, the network directly connects local communities, business spaces, and healthcare landmarks.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
2.2: Tackling the Cost of Living		
Continued partnership approach to the Cost of Living crisis, ensuring that resources are focussed to areas of greatest need.	Adoption of a joined up approach to external funds where appropriate to support place-based investment via SPF, Levelling Up and other Scottish Government funding sources.	EAC; AC; SE; EACVO
- Working with our partners in the third and private sectors, East Ayrshire Council committed all remaining funds from its Year 4 UKSPF allocation, achieving a number of significant milestones across the main themes of Communities and Place, Supporting Business and People & Skills. This brings to an end the UKSPF programme, which is being replaced by the new Local Growth Fund in 2026/27. 22 local projects were supported by the Scottish Government's Place-Based Investment Programme (PBIP) in 2025/26. The 5 year programme, which has now concluded, supported local ambitions for town centre revitalisation, community led regeneration and Community Wealth Building. Over the programme's lifetime, £5.6m was invested in 102 projects. PBIP celebration events are currently being planned to take place in August 2026 to coincide with the launch of finalised Local Place Plans. Funding for Regeneration Projects Place Based Investment Programme and Pride in Place Funding - Funding for Regeneration Projects Place Based Investment Programme and Pride in Place Funding.pdf - The East Ayrshire Anti-Poverty and Inequality Strategy was agreed by the CPP Board on 18 September 2025. It focusses on five interconnected themes: Household Poverty, Child Poverty, Health and Wellbeing, Organisational Change and Capacity and Individual and Community Resilience. Quarterly progress updates are being prepared for consideration at the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Strategic Oversight Group. In early 2025, East Ayrshire Council allocated £1m to set up a Grants Programme which targets resources for innovative projects that will help tackle poverty. In June 2025, applications were invited from third sector partners and to date, 40 grants have been awarded. Anti Poverty and Inequalities Strategy Update - Anti Poverty and Inequalities Strategy Update.pdf - East Ayrshire LEP is taking forward the Household Poverty theme of the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Strategy. A range of activity is being taken forward in support of this objective, including employability programmes, early learning and childcare provision, welfare rights services, financial support and partnership working with the third sector. - The East Ayrshire Fairer Futures Partnership allows third sector partners to lead local place-based approaches, recognising their knowledge of their area and feedback from families and service users. Between October – December 2025, 84 people approached partners for support, taking the total supported since the start of the Fairer Futures Partnership to around 750. While this work takes time, early intervention helps to reduce crisis demand, improve household conditions, reduce stress and avoid costs. The Scottish Government has allocated a further £0.300m to East Ayrshire for 2026/27. - NHSAA's Public Health Team continue to deliver a Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion Workshop. This workshop was reviewed and relaunched in the previous reporting period of 2024/25. The workshop is open to anyone working in Ayrshire and Arran who wishes to learn more about child poverty, the importance of financial inclusion services and local supporting resources. Between April 2025 and March 2026, 72		



participants from across Ayrshire and Arran attended the workshop. A condensed version of the workshop was also delivered at the Dietetic Professional and Service Development meeting where staff working in dietetics across Ayrshire were able to attend.

- In line with joint statutory duties alongside Local Authority partners, NHSAA's Public Health Department continue to work closely with East Ayrshire colleagues in contributing to and reporting on actions as part of **Local Child Poverty Action Reports**. Examples of activity within the plan for 2025-2026 include actions that attempt to mitigate the cost of living for patients and communities. As part of this, a Worrying about money leaflet for East Ayrshire was developed which contains a variety of information regarding support available for both income maximisation and wider determinants of poverty. This has been widely shared in digital and paper formats across East Ayrshire and is available to order, download and view at [East Ayrshire - Worrying about Money?](#)

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
2.3: Ensuring that all children and young people in East Ayrshire get the best start in life		
Provide a range of educational opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty and tackle the poverty related attainment gap	• Support all children and young people, particularly those most at risk to make best use of our support pathways for learning, work and wellbeing. • Maintain the emphasis on improving the attainment gap and achievement outcomes for children and young people. Life chances for communities & families etc. • Provide opportunities for children and young people where poverty is a barrier to learning to engage in activities within and beyond their communities which increase positive achievements and outcomes.	EAC; AC; SDS; DWP; NHSAA; EACVO/wider Third Sector EAC; SDS; AC; EACVO/wider Third Sector EAC; AC; SDS; DWP; NHSAA; EACVO/wider Third Sector
• The Scottish Government published its Follow-up School Leaver Destinations dataset in June 2026. It shows that for the 2024/25 academic year, East Ayrshire recorded the fourth highest percentage of leavers in a positive destination in Scotland, at 96.4%. This is the highest figure ever recorded in this area and represents a considerable improvement on the previous year, when the figure was 93.5%. • All educational establishments continued to provide 'Cost of the School Day' (COSD) projects and used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support children and young people where poverty is a barrier to their learning. This helped fund a range of initiatives including school uniform and equipment support, breakfast clubs and fully funded school trips all designed to increase engagement and participation. All our Heads of Establishment have been signposted to the Cost of the School Day Toolkit, published by Child Poverty Action Group. This provides an evidence-based approach to approaching COSD projects alongside case studies of successful interventions and projects. • School attendance rates in East Ayrshire are anticipated to have increased overall, based on provisional statistics, to 89.3% for 2025/2026, from 89.1% in 2024/2025. For SIMD Q1, attendance is expected to remain the same level in 2025/2026 as previously in 2024/2025 at 85.1%, and for SIMD Q5, attendance is expected to increase to 93.0% in 2025/2026 from 92.7% in 2024/2025. The recent appointment (April 2026) of a dedicated Quality Improvement Manager has strengthened strategic activity across educational establishments, with a focus on reducing pupil absence, unauthorised absence and persistent absence and aligning local and national performance information. Extensive engagement has taken place to audit and improve school systems and processes to effectively manage absence. Improved tracking using enhanced data tools is leading to earlier intervention where attendance becomes a concern. A service level review was undertaken at early Secondary level to identify key factors and supports in place for children and young people with low attendance. Strategic engagement has taken place to contribute to the development		

of a completely revised set of policy and procedures for Academic Session 2026/2027 in line with recent updates to national guidance, with associated planned professional learning to support implementation. Collaborative activity will continue to support sharing of effective practice. A model of intensive and targeted support is planned to enable further improvements across educational settings in academic session 2026/2027.

- A pilot programme was undertaken during 2025/26 which provided **live online bespoke literacy lessons** for young people (P7-S4) not attending school in-person linked to wide a range of personal issues. This has so far supported 10 young people back to in-school education, 8 young people to collate evidence towards a National Qualification and over 40 other young people to actively engage in their learning. Over 70% of young people taking part achieved more than 60% attendance in lessons.
- The **Pupil Equity Fund Planning Tool** is used to monitor the Council's spend across five key areas. During 2025/26 PEF spending was used as follows: 63% of funding targeted attainment and achievement; 12% targeted inclusion; 12% targeted engagement; 7% targeted participation; and 6% targeted attendance. The key focus remains on attainment and achievement to continue to close the poverty related attainment gap, however targeted attendance funding justifiably doubled from the previous year.



- Projected **attainment data** around the key measures in Literacy and Numeracy continues to show an improvement for all learners at data points gathered across P1, P4 & P7, whilst also demonstrating a closing of the attainment gap in a number of sub-measures. A full data set will be available on 30 June 2026. Academic session 2025/26 saw the final year of the Stretch Aims 2024-2026 cycle. East Ayrshire Council met and surpassed almost all ACCEL data related Stretch Aims during 2024/25, however the aspirational aims set for 2025/26 have been narrowly missed. The Scottish Government have requested all local authorities to set a further suite of Stretch Aims for 2026/27. Education and Skills colleagues are currently working with stakeholders to ensure these are both aspirational and achievable.

- **Attainment of school leavers in literacy and numeracy** in 2024/25 at each SCQF level compares very favourably to the Virtual Comparator performance. At SCQF level 3 and 4, East Ayrshire's performance (93.04% and 88.64% respectively) is comparable to national figures. The importance of these skills is consistently emphasised by employers across all sectors and remain a key differentiator for

employee recruitment; attaining above the Virtual Comparator supports East Ayrshire school leavers in maximising opportunities for post-school progression. [Secondary School Leaver Attainment 2024-25 - secondary school leaver attainment 2024-25.pdf](#)

- East Ayrshire Council's Employability Team attended all 7 East Ayrshire secondary schools to meet with groups of **statutory winter leavers** and promote support available. Collaborative working with Skills Development Scotland included drop-in sessions across the three SL premises to ensure a smooth transition.
- The number of **school leavers identified as economically inactive** and unable to accept an offer of further learning, training or employment at the October 2025 snapshot date reduced to 22, compared with 32 in 2023/24. Over the same period, the number of unemployed young people seeking work increased to 65, up from 30 the previous year. This means that, unlike in 2023/24, economically inactive leavers no longer outnumber unemployed young people seeking work. Economically inactive leavers are contacted regularly to confirm whether they feel more able to accept an offer of further learning, training or employment or alternatively are signposted to bespoke support to help them take their first steps back to

engagement with council or partner services. The 2024/25 School Leaver Follow Up exercise was completed in April, with results due to be published in summer 2026.

- Via NOLB funding, 302 **young people were supported** in 2025/26. This included employability support from our dedicated internal teams based within SL33 and SL66, as well as the externally funded activity awarded through the Trusted Partner Framework.
- Antenatal rights information has been circulated **on Badgernet** (the NHS midwifery system and app) that provides pregnant women with information about their statutory antenatal rights when in employment. An employer version has also been circulated to local workplaces to ensure they fulfil their legal duties.
- The **Infant Feeding Emergency Pathway** has been circulated to Family Nurse Partnership staff that work with families to ensure they are getting information on how to access infant feeding supplies and support with wider financial inclusion issues for families who are facing infant feeding insecurity.

PRIORITY 3: SUSTAINABILITY

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
3.1: Acting in partnership to support environmental sustainability		
Help existing businesses to decarbonise and support the growth of high potential, sustainable and low carbon businesses.	• Clean Growth Workstream. Delivery of the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan to complement the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), currently under development. At CPP level, 'cluster' opportunities should be identified which will help to create economies of scale. • East Ayrshire Net Zero Support Grant. Provision of assistance to SMEs with the implementation of energy and resource efficiency improvements. Can be used for green skills training, equipment purchase, renewable energy installations, etc. • Ayrshire Growth Deal. The Council and SE have established a net zero centre of excellence to support local businesses at HALO. The Net Zero Accelerator Pilot Programme has entered a second round which is being fully funded by the Council.	EAC; SE; UWS; AC; businesses. EAC; SE; Business Gateway; ZWS; businesses. EAC; SE; AC; businesses.
• The first LHEES (Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy) was approved by East Ayrshire Council and published in December 2024. The LHEES, which requires updates every 5 years, sets out the long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving their energy efficiency. LHEES is accompanied by a delivery plan which focusses on 7 strategic priorities which are aligned with local and national strategies. • The final Ayrshire Energy Masterplan was completed in March 2025. The key objectives of the masterplan are to present a pathway to net zero energy use that maximises socio-economic benefits for Ayrshire, acts as a framework to be a catalyst for investment in energy infrastructure and shapes intervention strategies and pathways to ensure a just transition to net zero. 18 actions have been set out, split into four five year phases,		

starting in 2026 with a recommendation to review and update every 5 years. Delivery of the AEM is a key focus of the new RES Delivery Plan 2026-29 and in the short-term, governance structures will be reviewed and the Clean Growth workstream will be reconvened under new leadership from UWS. [item 7b COMB 20250923 C Ayrshire Energy Masterplan.docx.pdf](#)



- East Ayrshire Council's Net Zero Accelerator programme secured the 'Building Towards A Just Transition' award at the 2025 COSLA Excellence Awards, held in St. Andrews in November 2025. The programme aims to help small and medium sized businesses to analyse, plan and make the necessary changes to cut carbon emissions, save energy and move output closer to low carbon targets. All Business Advisers have completed a one day CPD certified Net Zero awareness training course delivered by an external professional provider. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/climate-change-support-for-east-ayrshire-businesses-gains-top-cosla-award>

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Deliver new opportunities across a range of emerging growth sectors, including 'green apprenticeships', which will help deliver our net zero carbon aspirations.	• Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund. Launched in 2023, the £3.5m fund is available to employers across Ayrshire. They can apply for funding of up to £3,000 per person. Target groups include females, young people, people with long term health conditions and the low paid. The Fund has a sectoral focus and targets engineering, digital, visitor economy, food and drink and clean growth. • Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP). The 3 year plan (2022-25) ensures that pathways aligned into sectors aligned to the regional economy such as manufacturing, tourism and engineering are clearly defined throughout skills provision. • Ayrshire Growth Deal – CoRE. CoRE to act as a catalyst to provide an employability pipeline creating long-term sustainable jobs. Work, training and apprenticeship programmes will be developed in collaboration with academic and business partners. • Skills and training. Ensure that employability support provision is linked to green growth opportunities, and that sustainability is embedded within early years, school and college education.	EAC; SE; AC; SDS; businesses, social enterprises and Third Sector. AC; EAC; UWS; SDS; businesses. ALL

- Since the launch of the ASIF programme in December 2023, 38 East Ayrshire businesses from across a wide range of sectors have received funding via the **Employer Grants Programme**. The programme provides tailored support, delivering outcomes such as enhanced skills, career progression, improved workforce motivation, and accelerated business growth, all of which helps businesses to address their specific skills gaps. [Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund Update and Governance.pdf](#)



- The Ayrshire Skills Group approved the development of an Employer Grants Industry Led Pre-Employment Programme: **ASIF IGNITE (Industry Grants for New Industry Talent and Employment)**. This will enable the recruitment of unemployed individuals to gain an accredited qualification and work experience, all delivered by industry within a workplace setting. The programme is aligned to the engineering and clean growth sectors, where there are significant and immediate skills challenges. Accredited, industry-led training courses will be designed to replicate real workplace conditions as closely as possible. An inaugural pilot project has been developed which is an introduction to welding skills and coded welder qualifications, taking place at J&D Structural Engineers, Glengarnock. 18 unemployed individuals will be supported for 2 days a week over 15 weeks with a minimum of 12 trainees progressing to employment. Participants will be able to secure a range of qualifications in welding as well as health and safety and manual handling.
- An independent evaluation of the **Regional Skills Investment Plan** was published in 2025. It highlighted that the Plan strengthened regional co-ordination, improved strategic clarity, aligned educational curricula with business needs and increased the efficiency and targeting of skills funding. It also highlighted systemic hurdles which remain: persistent skills shortages, wage and gender disparities and the loss of UKSPF funding.
- East Ayrshire Council launched a new vocational training programme as part of the AGD's ambitions to upskill residents in Cumnock and Doon Valley, enabling them to access employment in the emerging EV and hydrogen automotive sector. A key component of the **Community Renewable Energy project (CoRE)**, it will develop new skills pathways and create a pipeline of skilled individuals aligned to employer needs. The first training session commenced in March 2026 at Emergency One in Cumnock, with nine mechanics from local garages working alongside staff from Emergency One to gain accredited EV qualifications. Further sessions are planned throughout March that would see as many as 30 local mechanics gaining skills and qualifications in the sustainable transport sector. Pupils from Robert Burns and Doon Academy will benefit from this initiative, as Ayrshire College has joined to deliver a vocational schools component, providing introductory skills on hydrogen and EV engineering to provide potential career pathways for young people. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/new-vocational-training-launched-for-e-v-mechanics>

- The refocussing of the CoRE project has seen a shift in its emphasis from the delivery of a single Centre of Excellence to a **multi-site Vocational Training Centre** to support business growth within the renewable energy sector. Subject to UK Government agreement, three thematic hubs will be established at various partner premises as follows: CoRE in the Community (at Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise); CoRE in Industry (at Emergency One's premises in Cumnock; CoRE in Education (at SL99, Dalmellington). The multi-site model enables the delivery of high-quality skills and vocational training while minimising ongoing revenue costs, helping to ensure a sustainable, long-term legacy of circular skills and employment opportunities for our communities. [Ayrshire Growth Deal Capital Projects Change Management Request - Ayrshire Growth Deal Capital Projects Change Management Request.pdf](#)



- Three secondary schools in East Ayrshire (Doon, Grange and Loudoun Academies) participated in the Powering Future Schools Challenge, which saw them take on sustainability challenges currently facing Scottish businesses. The Challenge, which brings schools and industry together, sees young people working in teams to research, develop and present solutions to challenges that have been set by leading Scottish businesses. Loudoun Academy was partnered with Booth Welsh and their team was challenged to develop a project that would benefit the local community by finding a use for old shipping containers. The team will on completion of the project, receive a SCQF Level 6 qualification, equivalent to a Higher. [Powering Futures Schools Challenge | East Ayrshire Council News](#)

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
3.2: Building resilience across our communities		
Deliver the Just Transition to a low carbon society by repurposing the area's existing assets (industrial and natural) to create energy self-sufficient communities.	- Ensure that all our public buildings are compliant with the new Climate Change (Scotland) Act's Net Zero Carbon Standards by 2045. - Decarbonisation of community buildings is being taken forward via the Council's Climate Challenge Fund. - Ensure the replacement of all petrol and diesel vehicles from the public sector fleet by 2030. - Innovative biodiversity and nature-based solutions, including tree planting and peat restoration. - Use the increased income from electric vehicle charging to develop the infrastructure for EVs. The aim is that 99% of properties without off-street parking will be within a 10 minute drive of a charge point.	ALL EAC; community groups ALL EAC; community groups; AC EAC; ARA

	• Ayrshire Growth Deal – Community Renewable Energy (CORE) Project. Testing and trialling of new technologies and use of low carbon technologies for powering and heating homes. • Housing to 2040 - work towards achieving the vision of a well-functioning housing system, the provision of high quality, sustainable homes, sustainable communities and access to homes that meet people's needs by adopting a place-based approach. • Identification of an Ayrshire Climate Action Hub to provide a strategic regional approach to climate change action.	EAC; AC; universities; community groups. EAC; ARA; HSCP; community groups. EAC; community groups
• Retro-fitting of existing buildings is ongoing across the CPP, with the adoption of new building standards and where possible, a migration from natural gas heating to zero direct emission heating to mitigate the increased operational energy costs. Key actions include estate reduction, fabric first retrofitting and heat decarbonisation. • The Enerphit retrofit of St Sophia's Primary School was completed and handed over in June 2025. This is the first EnerPHIT certified school in the UK, with the project acting as a pathfinder for the Scottish Government's Net Zero Carbon Public Sector Buildings standard. The building achieved nationwide recognition at the 2025 Building Innovation Awards. The main contractor, Fleming, alongside East Ayrshire Council, was shortlisted for the prestigious Best Retrofit Innovation or Project award • In 2024/25, East Ayrshire Council reduced its carbon emissions by 64.4% from just over 43,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent to just over 15,000 tonnes. This demonstrates sustained progress towards the target of Net Zero by 2030. • To promote behaviour change and encourage active travel, a 'Shoot to Saturn' initiative was launched in schools and early learning centres in 2024/25. This mission encouraged young people, families and friends to walk to school and 'ditch the car' for shorter journeys in order to reduce emissions and reduce congestion at school gates. • In support of NHSAA's promotion of Climate Week (September 2025), a SWAY resource was created which showcased the actions being taken by NHSAA. Climate week Information Stalls to promote active and sustainable travel were also set up and generated 45 staff engagements. Measures were subsequently implemented at a range of NHSAA sites including University Hospital Crosshouse.		



- **Wallace Court**, a new assisted living development in Mauchline, was officially opened in February 2026. The development provides 17 assisted living flats, three wheelchair-accessible bungalows and an onsite staff base for the Health and Social Care Partnership. Similar to other award-winning schemes across East Ayrshire, Wallace Court is the area's first net-zero assisted living build, powered by air-source heat pumps and solar panels.
- The tiered transition of **East Ayrshire Council's vehicle fleet** continued during 2025/26. This process is structured strictly by vehicle class and operational capability. Larger vehicles have been subject to delays due to payload restrictions, weight restrictions and costs and whilst this is challenging, innovative approaches are being utilised in order to maintain momentum in this area.
- To counter fluctuating energy markets and generate revenue for ongoing network repairs, East Ayrshire Council updated its **public charging tariffs for EVs**. From 1 July 2025, charges were restructured to align with neighbouring regions.
- East Ayrshire Council, in partnership with neighbouring authorities, is leading the delivery of the **Pan Ayrshire Electric Vehicle Charging Project**, a transformative

initiative to expand and modernise EV infrastructure across the region. Supported by Transport Scotland's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund and the Scottish Futures Trust, the project has secured funding to install approximately 307 EV charge points across 270 locations in Ayrshire. This investment will play a key role in supporting Scotland's transition to net zero transport by 2035. Work will continue through 2026 to secure a commercial delivery partner to support the long-term operation and growth of the EV charging network.

- The **Ayrshire Small Scale Tree Planting Programme** continued during 2025/26. Grants of up to £1,000 were made available for planting native trees in South and East Ayrshire within the UNESCO Biosphere region. Almost 3,000 trees have been planted since the launch of this scheme in 2023. Projects in the first three years of the tree planting scheme have included small copses, treelines, field boundary trees, parkland trees and orchards. The scheme aims to expand native broadleaf woodland which currently represents less than 1% of land coverage in Ayrshire. As well as supporting biodiversity the newly planted areas are intended to boost public wellness by creating spaces for recreation and green health. [Small-Scale Tree Planting Programme offers grants up to £1,000 in South and East Ayrshire - Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere](#)
- NHSAA introduced the **Green Endoscopy and Green Renal programmes** in March 2026. This builds on the National Green Theatres programme, which demonstrated that reducing waste and energy use in hospitals can be achieved safely while maintaining high standards of patient care. The Green Endoscopy Programme focuses on identifying carbon hotspots and reducing single-use plastics, better management of clinical waste and energy consumption associated with endoscopic procedures. The National Green Renal Programme aims to reduce the environmental impact of delivering renal care, particularly haemodialysis as a treatment with disproportionately high associated GHG emissions [NHS Scotland launches green healthcare programme to expand carbon and waste reductions – NHS Ayrshire & Arran](#)
- In June 2025, East Ayrshire Council held its fourth **Climate Change Education Awards**. This recognised and celebrated the positive climate actions taking place across our schools, centres and local communities towards our journey to NetZero. During this event we celebrated the efforts of 36 establishments and recognised special contributions from staff.

- The **Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership**, a £6.5m programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, drew to a close after nine years in May 2026. All 22 projects have now completed and a celebration event was held in Cumnock in October 2025. The achievements of the projects include improvements to landscape, wildlife habitat, walking and cycling connectivity and access to countryside. Local interest groups have also been set up and modern apprenticeships have been created leading to local people gaining skills and permanent jobs. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/coalfield-communities-success-celebrated-as-22nd-project-nears-completion>
- Works commenced at **Meagher Court, Cumnock** to retrofit three blocks of flats into a modern, low carbon, energy efficient housing development as part of a demonstrator project for CoRE. The project includes whole building retrofit insulation, external and internal upgrades, solar PV array with battery storage, as well as decarbonisation to three blocks of flats, utilising a ground source heat pump system. In addition, it will include accessibility adaptations to future proof the buildings and improve accessibility for elderly and disabled residents. Phase 1 of the retrofit works is expected to be complete by Summer 2026; phase 2 by the end of the year and phase 3 by the end of Summer 2027. [CoRE project gets underway in Cumnock | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
- In December 2025, East Ayrshire Council formally published its **LDP3 Nature and Biodiversity Topic Paper** for public consultation. This paper collected baseline data on the local environment and established the evidentiary foundation required to align future development with Scotland's broader goals to halt biodiversity loss.
- East Ayrshire Council approved its **Green Infrastructure Strategy** in February 2026. The Strategy will help support the ongoing delivery of LDP2, helping to ensure that land use change and development proposals are guided by a strong policy framework that prioritises green infrastructure and subsequent development proposals. Work has now commenced on the additional strategies and documents which support the aims and objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Play Sufficiency Assessment, Community Growing Strategy and Forestry and Woodland Strategy. <https://docs.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/r/?f=https://docs.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/CRPADMMIN/2012%20AGENDAS/CABINET/11%20FEBRUARY%202026/Green%20Infrastructure%20Strategy.pdf>
- The **Ayrshire Climate Hub** achieved significant milestones across East Ayrshire during 2025/26. Managed via the Energy Agency and funded through the Scottish Government's regional network framework, the Hub expanded localised community climate action, adaptation, and environmental protection. Its SEED funding scheme allowed local community projects and groups to apply for grants for climate adaptation and mitigation projects.



Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Continued collaboration with SEPA, Scottish Government and other partners to fully examine the issue of flood risk and associated implications for our communities, including our town centres.	• Development of flood risk management schemes in appropriate locations, based on results of flood study work. • Continue to explore the possibilities for the redevelopment and regeneration of South Central Kilmarnock in a responsible manner which minimises the potential for flooding.	EAC; ARA; SEPA; Scottish Water; Community councils EAC; Key Agencies Group

- An updated **Irvine Valley Flood Study** has been commissioned and is expected to conclude in autumn 2026. This project aims to identify a preferred option that is technically, socially, environmentally and economically acceptable, to alleviate the risk of fluvial flooding to Kilmarnock (Target area 20) to a determined Standard of Protection, which can be submitted to the Scottish Government for funding. In addition, the study will provide up-to-date flood extent mapping for the Kilmarnock area in order to inform Local Development Plan 3 and future development proposals
- Design development continues in consultation with key partners such as the Rivers Trust and SEPA to find a suitable solution for the stabilisation of the riverbank at the **Ayrshire Athletics Arena**. Detailed ground investigation survey works were completed in December 2025 to further inform detailed design and programme. Whilst timescales have not yet been confirmed it is anticipated that a contract will be awarded later in 2026 with works commencing Spring 2027 to align with the fish spawning season. In the intervening period regular monitoring continues to take place.
- A brief has been prepared to determine technical solutions in respect of issues at **Bellfield Interchange** including flooding. Once the relevant Scotland Xcel Framework is in place this work will be progressed.
- A planning application for the long standing vacant **former Morrisons site in South Central Kilmarnock** is currently under consideration.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Invest in town centres to encourage the return of visitors by day and night, and reimagine our vacant shops and public buildings as housing, business or community space.	• Support delivery of infrastructure projects to support growth in housing, business and activity within our town centres throughout the day and evening. • Implement a range of strategies and plans (Regional Spatial Strategy, NPF4 and LDP) to encourage town centre living and 20 minute neighbourhoods. • Work with the Kilmarnock Strategic Group to take forward the strategic vision and action plan for the town. • Develop a 10 year plan for the delivery of the £20 million investment in Kilmarnock via the UK Government's Long Term Plan for Towns.	EAC; EALT; CVOEA; KBA; Ayrshire Chamber EAC; community groups EAC; KSG EAC; SE; AC; NHSAA;CoC; SDS
• Works are progressing with the Cultural Kilmarnock project despite a number of challenges including the presence of unrecorded asbestos, poorly constructed structural features and challenges with the lead content of some existing painted surfaces. East Ayrshire Council continues to manage the situation carefully; however these issues are placing the project under early financial stress. Works will continue on a phased basis over the next two years, with an initial focus on the refurbishment of the interior and exterior of the building for the first 12 months followed by the construction of the new extension for the remainder of the programme once scaffolding has been removed.		

- Following the serious fire on King St, Kilmarnock in July 2025, the Victoria Buildings were demolished. East Ayrshire Council established a **Kilmarnock Town Centre Recovery Fund** to support local small businesses with direct financial assistance and businesses were provided with support to complete their applications quickly. King St was fully reopened to the public by 4 August 2025.



- A new interpretation board was unveiled in Kilmarnock's newest green space, **St. Marnock's Square**, in March 2026. The second board to be placed in the square, its unveiling celebrates the people who have passed through the area over the centuries while marking the dawn of a new use and purpose for the town centre venue. [A walk through history in Kilmarnock's newest square | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
 - A major funding award has been secured from Transport Scotland which will act as a catalyst for the creation of an ambitious masterplan for Kilmarnock town centre. The funding will accelerate the transformation of the **former multi-storey car park site**, marking a significant milestone in the town's regeneration plans. Planning permission has now been submitted to create a new civic area which will incorporate a performance space, landscaping, environmental improvements, street furniture and an Active Mobility Hub to support the promotion of physical activity, green travel, and to help create a safe and welcoming gateway to the town [Transport Scotland funding set to transform key site in Kilmarnock | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
- East Ayrshire Council approved updates to the **Mauchline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)** Action Plan in August and December 2025. This saw additional funding allocated towards Loudoun Street, 3a Earl Grey Street, The Cross, 5 Loudoun Street and the Boundary Wall Restoration project.
- East Ayrshire was one of 8 local authority areas in Scotland to receive an allocation from the UK Government's **Pride in Place Impact Fund**. £1.5m has been allocated over 2 years to develop shared community spaces, revitalise local high streets and improve public spaces. 5 projects have been identified and are progressing: Miner's Memorial, Cumnock, Alexander Fleming Memorial, Darvel, Reformer's Monument, Kilmarnock, Rugby Park Community Campus and the Kilmarnock War Memorial. [Funding for Regeneration Projects Place Based Investment Programme and Pride in Place Funding - Funding for Regeneration Projects Place Based Investment Programme and Pride in Place Funding.pdf](#)
- During 2025/2026, the **New Cumnock Re-Use Hub** reached major developmental milestones as it transitioned into its permanent home at the historic former Trotters building on Castle Street. The community café and pop-up shop opened its doors in Spring 2026 and the rest of the development is scheduled to complete by September 2026. It will include a dedicated remakery workshop for repairing and upcycling textiles, furniture, electronics, and small household appliances.
- In March 2026, East Ayrshire Council submitted a bid to the UK Government for Kilmarnock to be **UK Town of Culture 2028**. The shortlist of towns will be announced later this year. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport will award bid development grants of £60,000 to each of the shortlisted places which are invited to submit a full application. [Town of Culture Bid 2028 - Town of Culture Bid 2028.pdf](#)
- The Kilmarnock Strategic Group (KSG) is one of three groups (along with the Pride in Place Board and Taskforce) that continue to progress the **Kilmarnock Town Centre masterplan and regeneration projects**. The Kilmarnock Pride and Place Board presented the Regeneration Plan to UK Government at end of November 2025 and received official endorsement from the UK Government in March 2026. This allows the Plan to move into its delivery phase.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
3.3: Innovating to ensure sustainability in partnership services		
Accelerate the digital transition to promote equality, counter social isolation and unlock access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities.	- Raise awareness of the digital skills offer including AI, qualifications and automation to enhance employability. - Ayrshire Growth Deal – utilise 5G Innovation Region funding to build on technologies at the Ayrshire Innovation Park and to assist existing businesses within the Moorfield industrial zone, maximising the site's investment potential.	EAC; AC; SDS EAC; private sector.
- The Ayrshire 5G Innovations Region programme was extended beyond its original March 2025 deadline by a period of 12 months. The extension secured a further £0.400m from the UK Government to finalise its remaining scope and track its regional impacts. An evaluation of the programme was commissioned and found that the funding and support has helped to place Ayrshire at the forefront of digital technology. Highlights of the programme include the rollout of 25 advanced wireless network solutions; leverage of £1.6m in additional private sector investment and £0.360m in SME match funding; an estimated £7.76m in GVA via productivity gains, infrastructure improvements and innovation activity; and over 200 individuals were upskilled in advanced digital technologies, helping to future proof Ayrshire's workforce. The learning and momentum generated through the 5GIR project is now directly informing the £14 million AGD Building Digital Capital programme. 5G Innovation region project places Ayrshire at heart of digital transformation East Ayrshire Council News - The Ayrshire Digital Economy – 5GIR showcase event took place at UWS Ayr campus in August 2025. Businesses, politicians, academics and industry experts heard first-hand about the real-world impact of the Ayrshire Digital Economy projects supported through the UK Government's 5G Innovation Regions programme. The event shone a spotlight on how the 5GIR investment is transforming five key sectors - advanced manufacturing, aerospace, education, tourism, and SME productivity - while also supporting digital skills and fostering a collaborative innovation ecosystem across Ayrshire. https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/showcase-event-celebrates-ayrshires-transformation-to-5g-innovation-region - A new AGD Building Digital Capital programme was agreed in 2025/26 by UK and Scottish Governments, following submission of a change request. East Ayrshire's allocation of the budget is £3.902m, which will be used to deliver digital infrastructure investment within the three AGD projects (AMIC, Ayrshire Innovation Park and CoRE). The regional allocation also includes funding for the establishment of an Ayrshire Digital Intelligence Hub. Oversight of the programme will rest with the new Ayrshire Digital Economy Investment Board. https://docs.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/r/?f=https://docs.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/CRPADMMIN/2012%20AGENDAS/CABINET/20%20AUGUST%202025/Ayrshire%20Growth%20Deal%20-%20Building%20Digital%20Capital%20Programme.pdf - NHSAA was recognised at the Digital Health and Care Awards in March 2026. The organisation won the Data Driven Innovation and Collaboration Award for its successful partnership with the Holly Health app, which supports users to take control of their health and manage their own conditions through digital behaviour-change coaching. More than 11,000 Ayrshire residents have used the app, which offers 24/7 personalised support to help people build healthier habits and manage their wellbeing. Available to patients of all GP practices in Ayrshire and Arran, the project has now expanded into public health services and secondary care pathways including cardiac rehabilitation, pain management and weight management services. NHS Ayrshire & Arran wins Data Driven Innovation and Collaboration Award – NHS Ayrshire & Arran		



- The **East Ayrshire Digital Access Network (EA-DAN)** works collaboratively to source devices, digital skills training and internet safety awareness to help people gain confidence using online services and technology, to reduce digital exclusion and to ensure East Ayrshire residents can fully participate and engage in a modern digital society.
- **Ability Net**, in partnership with BT, introduced a new training programme in February 2026 that delivers free digital skills to the over-55s and disabled adults. A dedicated digital trainer for Ayrshire was recently appointed and EA-DAN partners are working closely with her to identify groups and individuals and facilitate premises to run the digital training sessions.
- **Barclays Digital Wings** continues to work with young people through Street League – Ayrshire, where participants learn essential digital and financial skills to support them into further education or employment using Barclays Digital Wings free learning platform.

Digital Wings can help learners enhance their knowledge on a variety of digital and money topics. Their learning catalogue contains programmes on a variety of topics, which include essential digital skills, digital safety, taking control of your finances and much more.

- East Ayrshire Council reported a growth in online accounts from 51,000 to 71,000 between March 2022 to March 2025. Over the same period the number of online submissions increased from 292,000 to 316,000. Phase 2 of the **Digital Front Door** project is now complete and the new 'Contact Us' process went live in January 2026. Engagement with Council services will continue to identify appropriate removal of generic e-mail addresses.
- East Ayrshire secondary schools continue to be actively engaged with **South-West Connects** (or SWConnect), a virtual learning campus collaboration run by the South West Education Improvement Collaborative (SWEIC). This network includes East, North, and South Ayrshire alongside Dumfries & Galloway councils. SW Connect delivers Advanced Higher and Higher qualifications digitally across 40 secondary schools in the region, allowing students to access a wider range of subjects without having to travel between campuses.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Support the delivery of community ambitions as articulated in Placemaking Plans, Local Place Plans and Community Led Action Plans.	• The Council is actively engaging with a number of communities to advance Placemaking Plans, including Mauchline and Kilmaurs. • With the new legislative footing for Local Place Plans, the Council is reviewing its processes in order to ensure that moving forward, support is targeted to where it is most required. • 25 Community Led Action Plans have been facilitated by Vibrant Communities with an additional five partner plans that have been launched across East Ayrshire. Vibrant Communities will provide continued support to any community who wants to develop a plan.	EAC; community groups. EAC; community groups EAC community groups

- As a result of changes in the planning system, placemaking plans are no longer being produced, having been superseded by **Local Place Plans**. Through the Vibrant Communities Team of East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, all communities throughout East Ayrshire have been supported to take forward Local Place Plans, with the approach taken dependent on whether an up-to-date Community Action Plan is already in place. The Galston Local Place Plan, produced by Galston Community Development Trust, was submitted in September 2025; it is currently the only registered LPP, however, a considerable number are expected to be registered around March and April 2026.



- From March 2025 until February 2026, East Ayrshire Council delivered the **Tell Us About Your Place** community engagement programme. Over 300 residents provided feedback via online and in-person surveys, heavily factoring local priorities regarding green spaces, path networks, and outdoor play areas into the emerging development pipeline. This public campaign was designed to gather resident feedback to shape the area's upcoming Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3), ensuring future land use, housing, and green spaces directly reflect the community's needs.

PRIORITY 4: WELLBEING

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Sub priority 4.1: Supporting a holistic life cycle approach to health and wellbeing		
Maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of an inclusive local economy	• Continued delivery of the Working for a Healthy Economy project to help individuals manage and improve their health to progress or sustain employment. Explore ways to maximise programme reach across our business base. • Ensure multi-agency approaches and pathways align with the holistic life cycle approach, eg in education in ensuring effective practices in transition pre-school to post-school for all ages and abilities. • Develop and sustain opportunities for volunteering in a range of areas including active schools, adult learning, community health and digital skills.	NHSAA; DWP; EAC ALL EAC; CVO; community groups
• Working for a Healthy Economy: from April to October 2025, there were 272 client engagements in East Ayrshire, of which 112 were group sessions, 78 initial health sessions and 82 full 1:1 support sessions. A range of events and promotional activities continue to be undertaken in support of this programme. A recent change proposal was approved by the Scottish Government to realign project targets in order to stabilise the delivery model and continue to meet the demands for the project through the delivery of health interventions. • A wide range of volunteering opportunities were offered by CPP partners in a range of areas during 2025/26, working with CVO East Ayrshire and Vibrant Communities. East Ayrshire Council granted all employees one day of paid leave per calendar year to volunteer with local community organisations. Volunteers managed local community larders and organised household food deliveries to combat child poverty and cost of living		

challenges. Youth work and early intervention activities also rely on a network of volunteers, who helped to deliver youth achievement, sports development and community learning programmes to support vulnerable young people.

- Volunteering opportunities have been expanded and strengthened within **East Ayrshire Community Hospital and University Hospital Crosshouse** to support a holistic life cycle approach to health and wellbeing. Actions undertaken have included developing and promoting volunteering roles such as welcome services, ward companionship, discharge lounge support and therapeutic activity-based engagement to enhance patient experience, reduce social isolation and support emotional wellbeing. Partnership working with local third sector organisations has supported volunteer recruitment, training and ongoing support, helping to increase community participation and access to volunteering opportunities. These actions have contributed to improved patient support during hospital stays and discharge, while also providing volunteers with opportunities to build confidence, skills and social connections, supporting wider wellbeing and community resilience priorities across East Ayrshire.



- NHSAA celebrated its volunteers at their annual **Compassion to Action volunteer award ceremony** held in Irvine in February 2026. A number of volunteers based in University Hospital Crosshouse and East Ayrshire Community Hospital won awards in recognition of their tireless dedication. [Celebrating the best of the best at this year's volunteer awards ceremony – NHS Ayrshire & Arran](#)
- Over 70 **Saltire award participants from Kilmarnock Academy** were celebrated for contributing more than 1,000 hours of community service. The Saltire Awards are Scotland's national youth volunteering awards for young people aged 12 to 25
- East Ayrshire Council secured funding from the Scottish Government's **Addressing Depopulation Fund**. This is being used to fund the research and development of a population strategy which focuses primarily on the south of the Authority. Dedicated staffing and resources are being deployed to carry out research into the depopulation

of the authority which was previously unavailable. This research will enable us to make informed recommendations, identify key actions and design implementation plans to boost migration in the southern parts of East Ayrshire including Dalmellington, Patna and New Cumnock.

- The Council's Adult Literacies Team continued to deliver 1:1 and HUBs for **Dedicated Adult Literacies supports** for adults across East Ayrshire during 2025/26. 90 new and continuing learners were supported with reading, writing, number and digital literacy training and 117 individual learning plans were created. 232 adults and 134 attended integrated adult literacy and family learning groups and 23 achieved Money MOT qualifications.
- The Council's **ESOL Team** supports adults with little or no English so that they can acquire the language skills they need to participate fully in everyday life. 199 learners were supported during 2025/26 and 139 actively attended weekly classes. A comprehensive timetable of ESOL courses have been developed, focussed on everyday language skills to support learners to live in a new country and to facilitate their personal development, independence and integration into their local communities. By incorporating family-friendly sessions in the summer timetable, social isolation was reduced and multi-cultural friendships and family learning were fostered. 48 learners progressed through SQA ESOL assessments and accreditations in June 2025, 13 progressed to Ayrshire College, 38 families were supported in family learning events, 13 ESOL classes were delivered each week and activity-based Fun Friday ESOL sessions were delivered weekly with 48 learners in attendance.
- **Community Based Adult Learning opportunities** continued to be offered and delivered in conjunction with DWP, Ayrshire College and East Ayrshire Council. This included the ME2U project which identifies unemployed individuals who would benefit from participating in a project

designed to improve their work readiness. 13 learners took part in ME2U's Cumnock programme which took place in September 2025 and they attended work placements in a range of local educational establishments. In Kilmarnock, a First Steps to ME2U cohort was launched in February 2026. A Mental Health and Wellbeing course was delivered in Partnership with Ayrshire College, DWP and Vibrant Communities. 8 Learners completed the course at Shortlees Learning Centre from July – September 2025 and they achieved a Mental Health and Wellbeing SCQF Level 4/5 qualification.

- Having commenced the **East Ayrshire Fairer Futures Partnership** in 2024 (a collaboration involving East Ayrshire Council, CentreStage, The Zone and YipWorld), the Scottish Government allocated a further £0.300m which will fund the Partnership to the end of the 26/27 financial year. This is being used to take forward tests of change that are designed to tackle child poverty and it is match funded by the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention Fund. Total spend on the programme will be £1.5m. Across all three partners, around 450 people have received support which promotes wellbeing, enhances skills or delivers basic 1-1 or in-home support. The projects are showing that sustained, one-to-one support, in the home or local community, builds trust with people and gets them to open up about their different challenges, creating a basis for long-term progress, improving wellbeing and gradually reducing the barriers. [Early Intervention and Prevention Fund - Early Intervention and Prevention Fund.pdf](#)

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Work to engage a wider range of organisations to take responsibility for delivering wellbeing across East Ayrshire	• Encourage anchor organisations to take a more active role in developing new relationships and facilitating wellbeing across public, private, academic and societal players. • Development of policy framework across organisations that supports fair work in its broadest context and incorporates a robust staff consultation process, giving the workforce an active voice. • Recognise inequalities arising throughout the workforce and proactively delivering interventions to address these through the application of wellbeing.	EAC; Community Groups; E&S Anchors EAC, SE, Fair Work and Skills Ayrshire, CWB Commission EAC, NHSAA
• In 2025, East Ayrshire Council began a partnership with the RCA Trust to support employees who are affected by Gambling Related Harm. This partnership involves the provision of training for employees to support colleagues who are affected as well as providing access to counselling for employees who are directly impacted. RCA Trust Gambling support scotland Scotland • East Ayrshire Council operates three employee networks for employees from minority communities: BAME employees, employees living with a disability and LGBTQIA+ employees. One of the functions of the networks is to provide a forum for employees from minority communities to contribute to the development of Council policies. In 2026, the LGBT group was able to contribute feedback on the newly proposed 'Supporting Trans Employees in the Workplace' policy and the Disability network were asked to review the revisions to the 'Supporting Attendance in the Workplace' policy.		



- Take A Bow Development Trust completed the redevelopment of the Former **New Farm Loch Community Centre** in Kilmarnock. The work by Take A Bow has saved and transformed the former community centre and has created a dynamic and exciting new facility for local people. The official opening ceremony for the refurbished centre took place in November 2025. The centre attracts over 70,000 attendances each year and is recognised as one of the most dynamic and well used community facilities in the area. The services delivered include Performing Arts Classes for young people; Lunch Club; Take A Bow Tots; Children's Parties; Youth Development Programme; Community Development Programme; Specialist Support Programme for Young People with Additional Needs; Dedicated Function and Performance Space. <https://newsroom.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/take-a-bow-takes-a-bow>
- CVO East Ayrshire received additional funding for year 5 of the **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund** and as a result, reopened the window for new applications across all three programmes: micro, small and large grants. The deadline for submissions was February 2026 and the focus of the fund is on early intervention and prevention.
- 75 companies and organisations across East Ayrshire are listed as accredited **Living Wage** employers on the Living Wage Scotland employer database, a slight increase on the figure from 2024/25. As an accredited Living Wage employer, East Ayrshire Council supported Living Wage week, which ran from 10-16 November 2025. [Employer Directory - Living Wage Scotland](#)
- To support early learning and childcare providers to pay the increased new **Real Living Wage** of £12.60 per hour, in 2025/26 the Scottish Government provided East Ayrshire Council an additional £0.254m to facilitate a 3.75% uplift to the sustainable rate as of 1 April 2025. [Early Learning and Childcare - Payment of Sustainable Rates to Funded Providers and Childminders 2026-27 - Early Learning and Childcare - Payment of Sustainable Rates to Funded Providers and Childminders 2026-27.pdf](#)
- NHSAA's Public Health Department continues to deliver a wide range of workplace advice, support and training for businesses across Ayrshire focusing on a number of health improvement areas including mental health and wellbeing, physical activity and healthy eating. The **Mentally Healthy Workplace Training for Managers** course gives employers and line managers a broad understanding of mental health issues in the workplace and improves skills and confidence in dealing with workplace mental health and wellbeing along with ensuring awareness of legislative responsibilities.
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran's **Staff Financial Wellbeing Group** has representation from Public Health, Staff Side, Staff Wellbeing, People, Safety and Culture and others. The group aims to support staff with their financial wellbeing with activity including a wide range of campaigns and communications across various staff engagement platforms regarding money and financial support, along with opportunities to reduce the cost of living for staff.
- NHSAA operates a **Staff Wellbeing Centre** at University Hospital, Crosshouse which provides a designated and protected quiet space for clinical and non-clinical staff to stop, relax, rest and take time for themselves to recuperate at work. The Centre also incorporates a Better Hub which delivers free weekly drop in weight sessions and smoking cessation classes.