

# **EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLAN 2015-2030**

## **Economy and Skills Delivery Plan 2024-2027**

### **Year one Annual Performance Update - 2024/25**



# EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLAN 2015-2030

## ECONOMY AND SKILLS DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2027

### PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS UPDATES 2024/25

#### PRIORITY 1: GROWTH

#### 1.1: Supporting Inclusive Economic Growth through delivery of the Ayrshire Economic Strategy

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Provide a range of supports to enable business growth and align educational provision with business needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued support to businesses in key sectors via <b>sector specific workstreams</b> (including Food &amp; Drink, Visitor Economy, Clean Growth, Digital and Aerospace).</li> <li>Deliver an effective system of co-ordinated support across the region to help promote more <b>business start-ups and expansion</b>, including better access to funding and finance.</li> <li><b>Ayrshire Growth Deal - Ayrshire Manufacturing Investment Corridor (AMIC)</b>. 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.</li> <li>Development of <b>innovative new courses</b> in growth areas including engineering, computing, digital, education and social care, which are linked to employers and developed with industry partners.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; SE; AC; universities; VS; SDS.</p> <p>EAC; REP; SE.</p> <p>EAC; SE; Strathclyde University; AC; SDS.</p> <p>AC; EAC; SDS</p>

#### 2024-25 Update

- The sector-specific recovery groups continue to work with a wide range of partners in pursuit of their objectives. Each group has its own detailed action plan, and whilst these are tailored depending on the needs of the sector, common themes have emerged, including sustainability, economic growth and digitisation.
- Working with the three Councils and the Regional Food & Drink Co-ordinators, the Regional Food & Drink Group has established 3 sub-groups to take forward the Strategic Action Plan ambitions in three distinct areas which are aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy: Supporting Sector Growth, Promoting the Sector as a Great Career Choice and Delivering A Sustainable Sector.
- In 2024/25, the Council's Business Support Team supported the development of 242 new businesses in East Ayrshire. Performance improved during the second half of the year following the recruitment of an additional Start-up Business Adviser, restoring the Team to its full complement of three full-time officers. Building on this year's performance, the Team is developing a comprehensive growth plan incorporating a range of diversified practices that will provide a clear road map. [2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update - 2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update.pdf](#)

- The Outline Business Case for the AMIC project was endorsed by both UK and Scottish Governments in April 2025. The next stage of development is submission of the Full Business Case for infrastructure works (comprising junction access, internal roads, utilities, etc) for the Ayrshire Innovation Park site as a whole. The infrastructure tender was issued in April 2025 with a deadline of 10 June 2025. Infrastructure works are scheduled to commence in Autumn 2025 with a 12 month period for completion. Thereafter, the Centre of Excellence and the various industrial units will be built on a phased basis until mid-2027. [Moorfield expansion plans approved | 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 2024-25 with designated staff in our seven secondary schools and Park School working to support business engagement and highlighting opportunities for young people. Several East Ayrshire schools are also introducing Foundation Apprenticeships to align with the Council's commitment to apprenticeships across council services.
- In September 2024, Ayrshire College unveiled its Strategic Ambition 2024-2027, setting out a bold vision to empower students, staff, and communities for a changing world. Launched at the College's staff conference, the strategy focuses on delivering outstanding experiences, building partnerships as the Partner of Choice, and enabling the future through innovation and collaboration. The strategy outlines plans to extend partnerships with Ayrshire's 10,000+ businesses while aligning education programmes with the region's key sectors [Ayrshire College Launches Strategic Ambition 2024-2027 | Ayrshire College](#)
- In October 2024, Ayrshire College welcomed leaders and experts from the aerospace, engineering, and advanced manufacturing sectors to its Kilmarnock Campus. The event, held in collaboration with Scottish Engineering and the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS), officially marked the College's membership with both organisations and reinforced its commitment to advancing engineering skills development. The gathering provided a forum for discussions on industry innovation, best practice and the evolving skills needed to support growth in these high-demand sectors. Attendees toured the College's cutting-edge engineering facilities, gaining insight into the technology and training that equip students with practical skills to succeed in their careers [Ayrshire College Celebrates New Partnerships with Scottish Engineering and NMIS at Industry Event | Ayrshire College](#)

#### **Case study: Bridge Johnson**

Bridge Johnson is a well established regional packaging distributor who had been based in Glasgow for many years. In 2024/25, the company were assisted by East Ayrshire Council's Business Support and Property Teams and decided to relocate to Moorfield Park, Kilmarnock where they were able to secure a sizeable warehouse and office unit. The move was completed in June 2024 after new offices were built within the building and fitted out by Ayrshire companies LC Shopfitters and Rakkaus Furniture.



Jon McKechnie, Chief Executive said that the move back to the family's hometown has been an exciting journey, with East Ayrshire Council being incredibly supportive along the way.

*"I'd like to particularly give mention to East Ayrshire Council who could not have been more supportive. They seem incredibly pro-active and offer many business-friendly initiatives that support sound commercial growth. Their Business Support Team is hands-on and switched-on and definitely worth a call if you're looking to expand in the West of Scotland."*

*"We look forward to supporting our clients from our new distribution centre and thank our fantastic team for all their effort in making this such a success".*

**Jon McKechnie, Chief Executive, Bridge Johnson**

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Attract more private sector investment into East Ayrshire, providing projects that generate jobs and wealth for our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of <b>Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2033</b>.</li> <li>Position East Ayrshire as a regionally and nationally significant destination for <b>inward investment</b>.</li> <li><b>Regional Economic Partnership</b> will provide voice for Ayrshire to press the case for government intervention and investment, incentives and other assistance.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; REP; AC; SE.</p> <p>EAC; AC; SE.</p> <p>REP</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Year 1 Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Delivery Plan had a total of 46 actions, many with a timescale reaching beyond one year. To date, 40% of these actions have been completed, with a number of multi-year actions carrying on into Year 2. Wider stakeholder engagement is progressing with theme leads to update actions and ensure that they enable a culture of delivery. East Ayrshire Council is leading on the Place and Environment theme and developing a spatial approach to the RES to ensure alignment with the Regional Spatial Strategy <a href="#">Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy.pdf</a></li> </ul>		

- A major event, 'Making and Keeping the £ in Ayrshire' was held in October 2024 at Ayrshire College's Kilwinning campus. Attended by Tom Arthur, Minister for Employment and Investment, it provided an opportunity to explore the Strategy's journey since launch and to hear from keynote speakers on the topics of skills and innovation before panel discussions on both. [Event charts economic journey since bold Strategy launch | East Ayrshire Council News](#).
- The three Ayrshire authorities agreed to the creation of a one year officer post to act as regional lead for the RES and support delivery of the year 2 actions. Now in post, the Ayrshire Regional Economy Lead delivered a range of engagement events during the year, including with East Ayrshire Council colleagues in March 2025. The purpose of these events was to consider the ongoing relevance of each of the Strategy's eight overarching priorities, the respective contribution of each partner organisation, the benefits to working regionally and to gather suggestions for improving the regional economy



Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Support the growth of the visitor economy in East Ayrshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to deliver the objectives of the <b>Ayrshire and Our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy 2023</b> and to create a thriving and inclusive visitor economy.</li> <li>• Build <b>pathways</b> into the sector from schools and colleges to encourage young people to stay in our area and ensure a skilled workforce is in place.</li> </ul>	VisitScotland; EAC; EALT; SE; Ayrshire CofC; Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance (AADA); Scottish Tourism Alliance.  Visit Scotland; EAC; AC; SDS.

## 2024-25 Update

- Tourism representatives from across Ayrshire attended the VisitScotland Connect 2025, at Aberdeen's P&J Live 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 [Ayrshire tourism reps to attend VisitScotland Connect 2025 | Ayrshire Today](#)
- Following a consultation exercise in early 2025, the Council provided its conditional support to proposals that would create a new Galloway National Park. Option 3, for which the Council has expressed a preference, would see the inclusion of a number of areas within East Ayrshire (Dalmellington, Bellsbank and Loch Doon) within the national park boundary. The Council recognised that the creation of a new national park in southern Ayrshire and Galloway could help grow and sustain the visitor economy in the area, with increased investment in tourism infrastructure within the area. [Galloway National Park Proposal · East Ayrshire Council](#)
- The new Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill, which grants councils the power to impose a tax on overnight accommodation, took effect from September 2024. VisitScotland published guidance on the Visitor Levy including the requirement to carry out detailed consultation. Within East Ayrshire, work has commenced which will inform the Council's decision. Initial tasks include gathering accurate data in relation to numbers of operators and bed stock, which will provide a baseline. [Scotland's visitor levy | VisitScotland Business Support](#)

- The UK Government's 5G Innovation Regions funding for Ayrshire included an allocation for the local tourism sector to support digital connectivity. In East Ayrshire, this was used to improve connectivity at Dean Castle Country Park where the public wi-fi service was unstable and not performing to an acceptable level. Funding was used to replace the current service with a fully managed solution that would provide a seamless connection when moving between buildings on the estate and in the wider park grounds. Completed in March 2025, the new infrastructure allows on-site vendors to connect and take card payments during large scale events. [2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update - 2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update.pdf](#)

## 1.2: Growing the future workforce through skills and education reform

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Adapt the provision of employability services and provide re-training and upskilling opportunities for all our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to review provision through the <b>Local Employability Partnership</b> to ensure that we continue to respond effectively to identified need.</li> </ul>	EAC; DWP; SDS; SE; AC; Third Sector
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote funded placements from externally funded sources including <b>NOLB</b> and SPF to maximise the number of people into sustainable employment, including Apprenticeships and Recruitment Incentive Grants.</li> </ul>	EAC; AC; SDS; EACVO; Third Sector
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement targeted employability activity to <b>engage economically inactive residents</b> and support them into appropriate further learning, training or employment.</li> </ul>	EAC; AC; SDS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lifeskills, <b>learning and volunteering opportunities</b> for local people to help them play an active and productive role in their personal, community, family and working lives.</li> </ul>	EAC; AC

### 2024-25 Update

- Via the LEP's Trusted Partner Procurement Framework, 35 national and local organisations are delivering training programmes and sector skills activity. Unemployed people across East Ayrshire receive a range of provision which complements in-house employability services and is mainly targeted at those furthest from the labour market. This four year commissioning framework runs until 2027. In 2024-25, commissioned projects included a rail sector skills academy for young people delivered in partnership with QTS and South Ayrshire Council; two specific programmes focusing on clients recently liberated from prison and clients serving community payback orders; support for young carers including access to salary supported work placements; a sector skills programme on Early Years and Childcare for unemployed parents; training in hospitality for young people with more complex additional support needs; and a further 17 projects facilitated through TSI delivered by local grassroots organisations as part of EALEP small grant scheme supporting almost 100 clients.
- 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 aimed 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 official opening of SL66 in Netherthird, Cumnock in October 2024 means that unemployed residents in the southern area can access a wide range of activity which complements existing delivery in Kilmarnock at SL33. This includes No-One Left Behind provision for economically inactive young people who undertake workshops and group sessions building soft skills through relationship development and practical activities. These interventions aim to increase confidence, improve communication, and develop teamwork, all of which are essential for entering any workplace. [Official opening of Skills and Learning 66 in Netherthird | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
- An ASN sectoral programme supports 10 young people with additional support needs over 24 weeks where they gain work experience in technical roles primarily in NHS Ayrshire & Arran but also with other partner employers.

Participants develop specific skills aligned with their abilities, building confidence and preparing them for progression into employment. Highlights of the programme included the development of a partnership with East Ayrshire Leisure Trust to secure 7 new work placements at Dean Castle Country Park; supporting 8 participants with 114 job applications and 18 interviews; continued work coach support for work placements within Ayrshire College and Crosshouse hospital; and access to accreditation including REHIS Food Hygiene (level 2).

- The annual 'Pathways to Careers' event led by East Ayrshire's Education Service took place in Ayrshire College in February 2025. The council's Employability team attended the event to provide guidance and advice to young people attending. With 60 employers and over 400 people registering from across East Ayrshire, 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.
- In 2024/25, the continued targeting of economically inactive clients with barriers to employment remained a priority. Through internally and externally commissioned services, economically inactive parents were invited to attend groups, often with their children, designed to build soft skills through activities like baking and creative balloon craft. When these clients progress towards work-readiness they are supported into more intensive employability supports including access to funding for accredited training or industry-specific skills programmes.
- Individual support is also available with the internal Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) team working closely with Skills Development Scotland to identify economically inactive parents followed by direct contact where targeted support is offered.
- With language barriers and additional support requirements inherent in the resettlement process, the internal PESF Team are able to offer intensive one-on-one time, delivering comprehensive support tailored to the individual needs of each client. In response to challenges faced by refugees with significant work experience and/or academic qualifications in being able to evidence verifiable credentials to prospective employers, funds have been allocated to cover the costs of obtaining qualification equivalencies and certified translations of original documents.

- The weekly Ukrainian and fortnightly Arabic job clubs within SL33 allows clients to access support from the ESOL Work Coach, the DWP Work Coach responsible for the individual's Universal Credit claim and East Ayrshire Council's Resettlement Team who are able to provide interpretation services. These Job Clubs are invaluable in terms of linking clients to their Universal Credit Work Coach to update their claim with other practitioners, peers and an interpreter present. It is also an environment where any other needs can be highlighted. For example, a group of Arabic women who aspire to careers within the beauty industry were identified and a beauty skills group was put in place for them at SL33. This allowed them to develop practical skills and learn English at the same time.
  - No One Left Behind (NOLB) funding supported 451 East Ayrshire participants during 2024/25. Of the 451 participants: 70 progressed into employment; 1 increased their salary or received in-work promotions; 4 achieved an apprenticeship; 6 started their own business; 61 moved into further or higher education; and 1 moved into further training. In addition to this, NOLB funding also contributed to the recruitment of a Grants Co-ordinator to EACVO to support Third Sector Employability provision as well as working closely with NHSAA to fund 3 paid placements for 3 months in which 2 of the 3 participants progressed into employment within the NHS.
- UKSPF funding allowed the Employability Service to register 206 new clients within Stages 4-5 of the Employability Pipeline. The service continued to support clients that were registered with the service in 2023/24. 99 clients progressed to a positive destination and 148 clients achieved an accredited qualification. 69 employed clients with multiple barriers were also assisted to achieve an improved labour market situation via accredited training. [UK Government - Shared Prosperity Fund.pdf](#)
- UKSPF funding also provided funding to 5 Third Sector organisations via the Trusted Partner Framework. This supported 198 clients within Stages 1–3 of the Employability Pipeline. [UK Government - Shared Prosperity Fund.pdf](#)
- The DYW Innovative Projects Showcase event took place at Ayrshire College, Kilmarnock in November 2024. Among the projects which have been developed include hair and beauty, barista, construction, bee keeping, bike maintenance, upcycling and rural skills. DYW Ayrshire projects provide various pathways to employment for young people through a wide range of skills development and education. [Developing the Young Workforce Ayrshire Innovative Projects Showcase | East Ayrshire Council News](#)



### Case Study: Me2U



ME2U operates as a partnership between DWP, Ayrshire College and East Ayrshire Council to identify unemployed people who would benefit from participating in a project designed to enhance their work-readiness. 10 learners completed ME2U training at the Barony Campus, Cumnock in September 2024 and 11 completed the same training at Shortlees Campus, Kilmarnock in February 2025. The individuals taking part ranged in ages from 18 to 60, with varying levels of previous qualifications.

The impact of this programme is clear: all participants were moving onto employment or further education and felt that taking part in the course had given them more confidence about taking these next steps.

*“Courtney was great to have in class. As the weeks progressed, she became more confident interacting with the children and built-up good relationships. She was able to support the children appropriately and model strategies she had seen being used by the class teacher. We were really grateful to have Courtney”.*

**Louise**



## Case Study: Gary Hunter



Gary, a Stage 4 client, contacted East Ayrshire Council's Employability Team to find out about training opportunities that would help him to secure a job. He was assigned a work coach who worked closely with Gary to build a clear pathway to work. From the outset Gary demonstrated an enthusiasm and commitment which would prove to be crucial in successfully completing his Dump Truck training and quickly thereafter, Gary gained a job in his chosen field.

*"Working with East Ayrshire Employability and my Work Coach Trudy changed my life around again. It was great to do the training and to be back to working and having money. It was a quick process and I enjoyed meeting Trudy to work on finding the best way back to work. I'd like to thank her for her support and helping me get back to work quickly. It's a great service and I would recommend it*

*to anyone needing help with training and getting back into work"* **Gary Hunter**

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Expand provision of school, college and apprenticeship places to meet emerging demands in new and high-growth areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workforce Strategies.</b> Enhanced focus on succession planning, including an increase in the numbers of apprenticeships.</li> <li>• <b>Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships.</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Jobs &amp; Training Fund.</b> 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.</li> </ul>	<p>ALL</p> <p>AC; SDS; EAC</p> <p>EAC; SDS</p>

## 2024-25 Update

- In March 2025, the East Ayrshire LEP secured funding for the delivery of the Whitelee Skills and Employability Programme. The programme offers tailored support packages to industries and employers with job vacancies. Targeted at AGD growth sectors, these packages include 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. The programme will create 30 apprenticeships, 30 Graduate Apprenticeships and a new Job Broker post. Ayrshire College will be involved as the primary training provider, given their broad offering of apprenticeship frameworks and they will also provide guidance and support to employers to help them structure and deliver programmes effectively.
- A group of Ayrshire College apprentices delivered a workshop to senior school pupils as part of the King's Foundation's Aerospace Skills Week at Dumfries House in Cumnock. The apprentices, who are employed by Spirit, Collins and Prestwick Aircraft Maintenance Ltd (PAML), delivered a practical lesson on Advanced Composite Materials (ACM) to students who had expressed an interest in working in the aerospace sector. [Ayrshire College Teams Up with Dumfries House for Aerospace Skills Week | Ayrshire College](#)
- As part of International Women's Day 2024, Ayrshire College's Kilmarnock Campus welcomed special guests from the railway industry to highlight the career paths open to females. The event highlighted the opportunities available to women and girls within the traditionally male-dominated rail industry and addressed misconceptions about careers that can start at an early age. [ScotRail visit to Ayrshire College shows railway careers open to everyone | Ayrshire College](#)
- 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 10 apprentices in 2024/25 and a further 10 in 2025/26. Recruitment of the second tranche commenced in March 2025. [Windfarm cash funds 20 apprenticeships | East Ayrshire Council News](#)



- In the period up to March 2025, 200 trainees were appointed to posts within East Ayrshire Council via the Jobs and Training Fund (163 Modern Apprentices, 33 Graduate Interns and 4 Graduate Apprentices). Through the Economic Development Recruitment Incentive Grant (RIG), a further 42 Modern Apprentices and 6 Graduate Interns were recruited by local businesses. This means that in total, the Jobs & Training Fund supported 248 trainees during the last three years. [Jobs and Training Fund success exceeds expectations for East Ayrshire's young people | East Ayrshire Council News](#)



### Case Study: Eilidh Burrow

*'I started with East Ayrshire Council as an Apprentice Electrician within the Street Lighting service.*

*I grew to love the variety of work and different places I can be on a daily basis. I completed my apprenticeship and successfully completed my trades exam after four years. I was lucky enough that an opportunity for a full time electrician within Street Lighting arose and due to my knowledge, experience and confidence I had gained within my apprenticeship, I applied for the post and was successful.*

*I have been happily working with East Ayrshire Council since. I enjoy working outside and the challenges my job can bring.*

*I would recommend an apprenticeship to anyone who is looking to learn, gain a qualification and get paid at the same time'.*

## 1.3: Building community wealth

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Enable local businesses to take advantage of public sector procurement opportunities, helping to increase their competitiveness nationally and internationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ayrshire Growth Deal Community Wealth Building (CWB) Project.</b> 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.</li> </ul>	EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support inclusive growth by <b>harnessing CPP (anchor organisation) spending power</b> in terms of buying from local or socially progressive businesses.</li> </ul>	ALL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of <b>collaborative and joint capital funding ventures</b> across the CPP.</li> </ul>	ALL

## 2024-25 Update

- East Ayrshire Council continues to support the Supplier Development Programme (SDP) by being the sole Ayrshire representative on the SDP Partners Group and by actively promoting the benefits of membership to our business base. Currently, there are over 50 East Ayrshire businesses registered to the SDP. The Council participated in the annual national 'Meet The Buyer' event and in the year ahead, will organise and host the annual Ayrshire Meet The Buyer event on behalf of the three local authorities. [Supplier engagement and development · East Ayrshire Council](#)
- An evaluation was commissioned to review the performance of the pan-Ayrshire CWB programme. It found that on most of the key performance measurements, the annual targets were met or exceeded. In total, 389 enterprises in East Ayrshire received support during this period, of which 54 were new businesses. Evidence indicated that procurement support was instrumental in business growth and job creation. A majority of supported firms reported increased confidence in applying for public contracts and several cited procurement readiness as a key factor in securing new contracts.
- 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, partners are optimising collaborative opportunities which makes it easier for local and smaller businesses to bid for contracts.



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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following a mid-term review, the <b>Community Wealth Building project</b> 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.</li> </ul>	EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO.
<h2>2024-25 Update</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 businesses were awarded CWB grants for a variety of purposes related to the fair work, procurement and climate change pillars. This funding allowed businesses to improve their resilience, innovation and ability to access markets. The flexibility of this funding mechanism helped businesses to tailor their responses to local challenges, from energy efficiency upgrades to digital innovation. 129 businesses were supported to review their practices in line with the Green/climate agenda. CWB officers helped to promote a fairer, more sustainable local economy by encouraging businesses to 'keep it local', allowing shorter supply chains and adopting practices to meet net zero targets.</li> </ul>		

## PRIORITY 2: FAIRNESS

### 2.1: Promoting equity and inclusion across the life cycle

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Support social enterprises and the third sector to provide facilities and employment, and deliver inclusive growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved support for the third sector to deliver <b>community wealth</b> via the development of social, family owned and employee-owned and co-operative enterprises and the promotion of opportunities for employee ownership.</li> <li>The creation of a strengthened network of <b>employability hubs</b> in Kilmarnock, Cumnock, Dalmellington and Darvel will provide additional facilities for social enterprises to work with young people.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; SE; SDS; Fair Work Ayrshire; EACVO.</p> <p>EAC; EACVO.</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of the new Galston employability hub continued during 2024/25, and the new facility is scheduled to open in Summer 2025, as part of a multi-use development at the refurbished Galston Town Hall and Library. Discussions are continuing with EA Leisure Trust in relation to the configuration of this multi-user building and usage options. A temporary facility was set up at East Ayrshire CVO premises in Bridge St, Galston. SL66, the employability hub in Netherthird, Cumnock was officially opened by Cllr Shona Morrison, COSLA President, in October 2024. In Dalmellington, the centre was rebranded as the Doon Valley Employability Hub and has been repurposed to provide an area for clients to receive employability support and take part in 1-1 and group sessions.</li> </ul>		

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Invest in new, sustainable transport infrastructure that improves the transport network and accessibility, particularly in our rural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of the <b>Active Travel Strategy (2022-32)</b>, identifying and delivering improvements for journeys undertaken in East Ayrshire by walking and cycling.</li> <li><b>Ayrshire Growth Deal – all projects.</b> Creation of low carbon solutions for transport and active travel connections, including new cycle routes and paths.</li> <li>Continue to make the case for infrastructure investment at <b>Bellfield Interchange</b>, recognising its strategic importance to the long-term economic regeneration of East Ayrshire and the wider region.</li> </ul>	<p>ARA; EAC; SPT; EALT</p> <p>EAC; ARA; EALT; community groups.</p> <p>EAC; ARA; Transport Scotland</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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. <a href="#">Ayrshire Embarks on Ambitious Active Travel Route Development   Ayrshire Daily News</a></li> </ul>		



- Design development works in relation to the Kilmarnock Infinity Loop project, an active travel, tourism and community connectivity project in the town, are progressing well. The funding opportunities for active travel via Sustrans are also being investigated to support enhancement along Sturrock Street.



- Through the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership (CCLP), the Doon Valley Active Travel route has been supported, and work has been carried out by Modern Apprentices working with East Ayrshire Woodlands, funded by the CCLP. The high quality and substantially segregated route will run from Loch Doon to Ayr. [Doon Valley Trail](#)
  - The CoRE (Community Renewable Energy) project is a flagship Ayrshire Growth Deal project in East Ayrshire. Its aims include the establishment of a community electric car club, in partnership with Coalfields Community Transport, to help our rural and deprived communities to become better connected. The project will help increase accessibility to a range of essential services such as employment, education, healthcare and recreational activities. A wheelchair accessible vehicle will also be incorporated, to enable volunteer drivers and carers to transport disabled individuals and tackle social isolation. A digital booking app will facilitate the project's monitoring and evaluation, through integrated surveys, vehicle tracking and collection of demographic information, to understand the demand, drivers and barriers to electric vehicle uptake within our communities. [Community Renewable Energy Project · East Ayrshire Council](#)
  - 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. E-bikes will be 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 and assessed and training will be provided to enable individuals to participate in maintenance and repair of e-bikes.
- The Bellfield Interchange was discussed by the Head of Economic Growth at the Scottish Parliament as part of discussions on the Ayrshire Growth Deal. East Ayrshire Council continues to work with Transport Scotland to ensure that the necessary improvements are made to guarantee that road users, pedestrians and cyclists can use the road and active travel network more safely and efficiently. In addition, the Council will investigate further improvements to the area east of Bellfield Interchange at Kirklandside/ Kaimshill to further enhance the transport infrastructure and active travel network in the area. The LDP2 INF4: Developer Contribution policy identifies Bellfield Interchange, Kaimshill and Kirklandside as areas which would trigger the requirement for developer contributions.

## 2.2: Tackling the Cost of Living

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Continued partnership approach to the Cost of Living crisis, ensuring that resources are focussed to areas of greatest need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Adoption of a joined up approach to external funds where appropriate to support <b>place-based investment</b> via SPF, Levelling Up and other Scottish Government funding sources.</li></ul>	EAC; AC; SE; EACVO
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working with our partners in the third and private sectors, East Ayrshire Council committed all remaining funds from our Year 3 UKSPF allocation, achieving a number of significant milestones across the main themes of Communities and Place, Supporting Business, People &amp; Skills and Multiply. Many of these achievements are highlighted throughout this report. A new SPF Investment Plan, based around a smaller number of programmes and projects (reflecting the significant reduction in the Council's allocation) has been approved by the UK Government for 2025/26. <a href="#">UK Government - Shared Prosperity Fund.pdf</a></li><li>In September 2024, East Ayrshire Council endorsed the projects awarded Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) funding for 2024/25 from the Scottish Government. A total of 12 projects benefitted from funding. Continued support is being given to those groups who were not successful, including the offer of feedback, alternative advice and support through the Wider Investment Network Officer Group.</li><li>PBIP funding has helped to revitalise community buildings throughout East Ayrshire that have equipped them better to serve local residents, offering food, warmth and help when needed. Funding has been used to carry out capital works such as kitchen refurbishments in a number of venues including Netherthird Community Centre, Bonnyton Community Centre and YMCA. These venues now incorporate food larders and cafes with affordable, healthy menus and they have provided employment and volunteering opportunities for local people. <a href="#">Place Based Investment Programme 2024-25 - Year 4 - Place Based Investment Programme 2024-25 - Year 4.pdf</a></li><li>PBIP has also enabled the growth of community gardens that allow some communities to grow their own food, and a new Food Larder Van, which delivers food to rural areas, has been purchased.</li><li>NHSAA work alongside local authority colleagues to deliver on joint duties for Local Child Poverty Action Plans and Reporting. As part of this, an annual NHS Board Paper provides detail on NHS action plans and activities to mitigate and prevent child poverty along with examples of activities/information relating to employability, anchor role and the CWB financial powers pillar <a href="https://www.nhsaaa.net/wp-content/uploads/2024-12-02-BM-P14-Tackling-Child-Poverty-report.pdf">https://www.nhsaaa.net/wp-content/uploads/2024-12-02-BM-P14-Tackling-Child-Poverty-report.pdf</a></li></ul>		

## 2.3: Ensuring that all children and young people in East Ayrshire get the best start in life

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Provide a range of educational opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty and tackle the poverty related attainment gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support all children and young people, particularly those most at risk to make best use of our <b>support pathways</b> for learning, work and wellbeing.</li> <li>Maintain the emphasis on improving the <b>attainment gap</b> and achievement outcomes for children and young people. Life chances for communities &amp; families etc.</li> <li>Provide <b>opportunities for children and young people</b> where poverty is a barrier to learning to engage in activities within and beyond their communities which increase positive achievements and outcomes.</li> <li></li> </ul>	<p>EAC; AC; SDS; DWP; NHSAA; EACVO/wider Third Sector</p> <p>EAC; SDS; AC; EACVO/wider Third Sector</p> <p>EAC; AC; SDS; DWP; NHSAA; EACVO/wider Third Sector</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 to fund breakfast clubs and fully funded school trips. Central Education Officers are continuing to support a wide spread of such initiatives. <a href="#">East Ayrshire Children and Young People Services Plan 2023-2026</a></li> <li>School attendance rates in East Ayrshire have yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels, with a significant correlation between attendance and deprivation. East Ayrshire's school attendance rate of 88.3% in 2023/24 is ranked as the lowest in Scotland, although only two percent less than the national average of 90.3%. Collaborative efforts and strategic actions have been taken to combat this issue, including enhanced professional learning, further support for vulnerable groups and strengthened partnerships. Attendance improvement will remain a service-wide priority embedded in school and quality improvement plans.</li> <li>The PEF Planning Tool is used to monitor the Council's spend across five key areas. By May 2025, 65% of PEF spending was on attainment and achievement; 14% on inclusion; 11% on engagement; 7% on participation; and 3% on attendance. The key focus is on attainment and achievement in order to close the poverty related attainment gap.</li> <li>Projected attainment data around the key measures in Literacy and Numeracy continues to show an incremental improvement for all learners at data points gathered across P1, P4 &amp; P7, whilst also demonstrating a closing of the attainment gap in a number of sub-measures. A full data set will be available on June 30th 2025.</li> <li>Senior phase data released in February 2025 indicated a significant increase in almost all attainment measures for young people leaving school in 2023/24. East Ayrshire outperformed national, SWEIC and Virtual Comparator measures in almost all key areas.</li> <li>Most recent data published by the Scottish Government in February 2025 shows that 95.2% of school leavers in East Ayrshire entered an initial positive destination in 2023/24. This figure is 0.5pp below the national average and represents a rise of 0.1pp on the level achieved in 2024 for leavers from 2022-23.</li> </ul>		

- Of the 191 statutory summer leavers reported in the 16+ Data Portal, 176 (92%) were in positive destinations at February/March 2025. As a cohort historically with poorer outcomes, there is clear progress in the work undertaken in school to deliver effective careers pathways for young people leaving in S4. Of the remaining 15 statutory leavers in negative destinations, 4 were economically inactive and unable to accept an offer of further learning, training or employment at March 2025.
- The number of school leavers identified as economically inactive and unable to accept an offer of further learning, training or employment at the October snapshot date is at a historic high with 32 economically inactive leavers. These leavers outnumber unemployed young people seeking work (30) for the first time ever in East Ayrshire. 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.
- Via NOLB funding, 362 young people were supported in 2024/25. 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.

## PRIORITY 3: SUSTAINABILITY

### 3.1: Acting in partnership to support environmental sustainability

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Help existing businesses to decarbonise and support the growth of high potential, sustainable and low carbon businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clean Growth Workstream.</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>East Ayrshire Net Zero Support Grant.</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Ayrshire Growth Deal.</b> 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.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; SE; UWS; AC; businesses.</p> <p>EAC; SE; Business Gateway; ZWS; businesses.</p> <p>EAC; SE; AC; businesses.</p>

### 2024-25 Update

- The first LHEES (Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy) was approved by East Ayrshire Council and published in December 2024. The LHEES was subject to a public consultation which generated a number of responses. The outline delivery plan has now been developed in more detail and is expected to be approved by mid-2025. The detailed action plan covers strategic actions alongside building

level interventions for domestic, non-domestic and community owned buildings. It also sets out the short/medium/long term actions in relation to the development of projects. The strategy is being kept under review and developed further through more detailed analysis.

[EAC Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy \(LHEES\) | Engagement East Ayrshire](#)

- The Ayrshire Energy Masterplan has now been delivered, with the final documents subject to review and formal approval by the respective partners. Discussions are also underway to plan the next steps and delivery of the actions within the masterplan. [Ayrshire Energy Masterplan | Ayrshire Growth Deal](#)

### Case Study: Net Zero Accelerator

East Ayrshire Council's Net Zero Accelerator programme, which was launched in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Net Zero Nation, was designed to mobilise local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on their journey towards achieving Net Zero, addressing the challenges posed by climate change while fostering economic resilience and growth.

The Net Zero Accelerator is a 12 month initiative offering participating businesses structured guidance through in person and online sessions. The programme focuses on reducing carbon emissions, enhancing business sustainability and equipping SMEs with the tools and confidence to thrive in a low carbon economy.



It has delivered a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits. In terms of carbon reduction, there has been a reduction of over 14,500 tonnes across the 50 participating businesses. Participation has also assisted those companies to secure over £37 million in new contracts, creating over 100 jobs. The programme's success and scalability are evident in plans to expand into 2025. Its structured framework, combining local partnerships and expert consultancy, offers a replicable model for other councils aiming to address the climate crisis while supporting their

local economies. The programme was recently shortlisted as a finalist at the 2025 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards. [Financial support for businesses · East Ayrshire Council](#)

Going forward, Net Zero programmes will be focussed around three products: Net Zero Ready; Net Zero Business Grant; and Energy Audit vouchers. These aim to build on the successes, to scale the scope of the coverage, and to demonstrate a replicable model for other councils aiming to address the climate crisis while supporting their local economies.



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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund.</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP).</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Ayrshire Growth Deal – CoRE.</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Skills and training.</b> Ensure that employability support provision is linked to green growth opportunities, and that sustainability is embedded within early years, school and college education.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; SE; AC; SDS; businesses, social enterprises and Third Sector.</p> <p>AC; EAC; UWS; SDS; businesses.</p> <p>ALL</p>

### 2024-25 Update

- Launched in December 2023, ASIF provides businesses with the opportunity to apply for funding of up to £3,000 per person to help address skills gaps within their workforce. To date, there have been five rounds for applications, the latest of which took place in April/May 2025. The most recent funding round saw a further three East Ayrshire businesses and 18 employees receiving training support from the Fund at a total cost of £11,475: Chloe Murdoch, WP Commercial Property Limited and Above Adventure. By the end of March 2025, 133 individuals had participated in training funded via ASIF in East Ayrshire, with 36 businesses directly benefitting from the upskilling of their workforce. [Skills Investment Fund | Ayrshire Growth Deal](#)
- An independent evaluation of the Regional Skills Investment Plan was commissioned in early 2025 and this work is ongoing. A number of benefits have been identified from the emerging findings, including the optimisation of resource allocation across partner organisations; the identification of clear, shared objectives and responsibilities; the role of the Plan in helping to leverage external funding such as SPF; and the close alignment of the Plan with Ayrshire College's curriculum. [ayrshire-regional-skills-investment-plan.pdf](#)
- A CoRE Full Business Case (FBC) is being prepared for submission to both Governments. This Ayrshire Growth Deal project will deliver a programme of pathfinder demonstrator projects which will develop scalable solutions to demonstrate how our key sectors, such as buildings, energy and transport can transition towards net-zero. Delivery of the pathfinder projects will directly create local low carbon jobs and training opportunities. Training programmes aligned to delivery of the demonstrator projects will help to upskill East Ayrshire residents to enable their involvement within project delivery. A later phase of the CoRE project will involve the creation of a vocational skills academy in Cumnock which will bring vocational training, skills development and STEM education courses to the region in order to address regional skills shortages within the renewables industry. Delivery of these programmes will enable our communities to take economic advantage of the net zero transition, whilst building the local skills capacity to stimulate private sector investment and growth.

### 3.2: Building resilience across our communities

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all our public buildings are compliant with the new Climate Change (Scotland) Act's <b>Net Zero Carbon Standards</b> by 2045.</li> <li>• Decarbonisation of community buildings is being taken forward via the Council's Climate Challenge Fund.</li> <li>• Ensure the replacement of all petrol and diesel vehicles from the <b>public sector fleet</b> by 2030.</li> <li>• Innovative <b>biodiversity and nature-based solutions</b>, including tree planting and peat restoration.</li> <li>• Use the increased income from <b>electric vehicle charging</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Ayrshire Growth Deal – Community Renewable Energy (CORE) Project.</b> Testing and trialling of new technologies and use of low carbon technologies for powering and heating homes.</li> <li>• <b>Housing to 2040</b> - 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.</li> <li>• Identification of an <b>Ayrshire Climate Action Hub</b> to provide a strategic regional approach to climate change action.</li> </ul>	<p>ALL</p> <p>EAC; community groups</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>EAC; community groups; AC</p> <p>EAC; ARA</p> <p>EAC; AC; universities; community groups.</p> <p>EAC; ARA; HSCP; community groups.</p> <p>EAC; community groups</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		



external funding, energy generation and improved controls to reduce energy usage. The Council more than halved its emissions from just over 32,000 tonnes to just under 15,000 tonnes between 2021/22 and 2023/24. [Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24 - Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24.pdf](#)

- 25 schools and early learning centres completed the Powerdown challenge in 2024 and were presented with a 'Windy' trophy at an awards ceremony in June 2024. Powerdown is the Council wide energy efficiency campaign, which is designed to educate and inform behaviour change and good energy practices that will reduce energy consumption both at home and in workplaces.
- Progress to transition the Council's car and small van fleet has stalled, with the total number of EVs remaining around 100 over the last four years. The Council purchased new fleet management software and estimates produced by that system suggest that around 100 vehicles could be replaced by EZs, delivering a lifecycle saving of £0.250m. [Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24 - Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24.pdf](#)
- Recent tree planting projects in the Doon Valley by East Ayrshire Woodlands have included an 808m stretch of hedgerow with native broadleaved species of trees and shrubs totalling 4,300. The hedgerow will provide an element of shelter to agricultural stock in the field, whilst contributing to adjacent environmental schemes in the landscape.
- Via the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership, 4.25 hectares of native pioneer woodland has been created. Almost 8,000 locally grown plants and trees have been sourced and planted in partnership with EADAH Ltd. A further 80 hectares of peatland have been restored with 20 remaining hectares to be carried out in 2025.
- Via the CoRE project, the Meagher Court housing retrofit demonstrator project will develop, trial and evaluate tiered levels of housing retrofit to find a scalable pathway to transition our building stock to net zero. The project will adopt a whole-building approach, including trial of an innovative ground source heat network, which will extract geothermal heat from a shared borehole array, providing clean and sustainable low cost heating for residents. The project will incorporate a solar PV array, combined with battery storage and flexible energy

- Construction of the new Dunlop Early Childhood Centre was completed during the year and the facility is now operational. This pilot Passivhaus design promises to achieve exemplar levels of energy efficiency and utilises Net Zero emissions heating in the form of heat pump technology. The new St Sophia's Primary School is currently under construction and represents Scotland's first Enerphit conversion of a school building. It's completion in 2025 will mark a milestone in the Council's decarbonisation journey. [Building a Future East Ayrshire Capital Investment Programme Update - Building a Future East Ayrshire Capital Investment Programme Update.pdf](#)

- Via its Climate Change Strategy which was updated in December 2024, East Ayrshire Council is refocussing its priorities on delivering reduced costs and reducing its overall carbon footprint. A number of projects are being progressed including LED replacement and exploring

solutions to help balance the local grid network, whilst delivering renewable electricity for residents. Outcomes and learnings from the project will help to inform strategic investment decisions to transition our domestic properties and tackle fuel poverty.

- The LDP2 was adopted in April 2024. It contains a suite of policies which seek best practice and design to obtain positive outcomes for biodiversity and the integration of nature-based solutions. Policy NE4: Nature Crisis recognises and seeks to address the nature crisis setting out support for proposals which contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, restoration of degraded habitats, builds and strengthens nature networks and connections – actively seeking mitigation and nature-based solutions. Policy DES1: Development Design promotes green infrastructure which connects to wider green and blue networks. Policy OS1: Green and Blue Infrastructure sets the requirement that infrastructure should be designed to provide biodiversity and habitat enhancement alongside water management and open space functions. Policy NE8 sets a presumption against the loss of ancient, semi-natural woodland, native woodland, hedgerows, TPOs and individual trees of high biodiversity value. Policy NE9: Woodland Creation supports proposals to enhance, expand and improve woodlands. The LDP2 has a policy framework which protects nature conservation sites, wild land alongside vulnerable, threatened and protected species.
- The Ayrshire Climate Hub was established. It helps local community groups to develop local plans, take up community funding opportunities, facilitate networking and ensure a joined-up approach is being taken to tackling climate change at regional level. Funding of up to £1,000 is available to support local community groups to implement climate action projects and the Hub also provide Carbon Literacy Training to local communities. [Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24 - Submission of the Climate Change Public Sector Report for 2023-24.pdf](#)

### **Case Study: Kennedy Drive, Kilmarnock**

In January 2025, the final handovers were completed of [48 affordable homes on the site of the former Silverwood Primary School, Kennedy Drive, Kilmarnock](#). The homes were specially designed to meet a range of needs and requirements of the local community including general needs, wheelchair accessible and older ambulant disabled residents.



The development is also the third and largest development that is designed to achieve (regulated) operational net zero carbon. In order to achieve net zero emissions from regulated energy, each home utilises fabric first design principles with insulated wall zones, triple-glazed windows and enhanced door sets, as well as renewable technologies including the installation of air source heat pumps and solar PV panels on each roof. The combination of these measures means the homes are compliant with affordable house building standards in Scotland to tackle fuel poverty.

*“Kennedy Drive is the Council’s third Net Zero project with full consideration being given to low carbon technologies. This includes the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps instead of gas boilers, the use of Scottish products and materials wherever possible to reduce transport energy and solar panels installed on all roof spaces.*

*“These homes are life changing for local people. They really suit the local area but more importantly they have been designed to meet net zero regulations, helping to lower fuel bills and also are specially designed to meet community care needs of local people.”*

**Councillor Douglas Reid, Leader, East Ayrshire Council**

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of <b>flood risk management schemes</b> in appropriate locations, based on results of flood study work.</li> <li>Continue to explore the possibilities for the redevelopment and regeneration of <b>South Central Kilmarnock</b> in a responsible manner which minimises the potential for flooding.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; ARA; SEPA; Scottish Water; Community councils</p> <p>EAC; Key Agencies Group</p>

### 2024-25 Update

- The LDP2 (adopted April 2024) includes two policies regarding development in South Central Kilmarnock (PROP1 and SS8). The aim of these policies is to encourage regeneration in this area, and the associated placemaking map sets out a number of alternatives in terms of addressing flooding risk and encouraging the built redevelopment of all or part of the area. The LDP2 also sets out a policy (CR1) to set a precautionary approach to flood risk.
- East Ayrshire Council and SEPA have considered how updating the River Irvine Flood Study may assist in better determining risk, recognising that the SEPA flood maps are not accurate down to local level and variations will not be caught by the blanket peak river flow/peak rainfall intensity allowance across the entire Clyde region. Improved information at local level will allow ARA and the Planning Authority to make informed, sound decisions based on accurate local evidence and data, decisions which SEPA should in turn be able to support. The level of variation is unlikely to be significant and this exercise could render more areas undevelopable rather than fewer. The information will however allow the local authority to make decisions with a sound understanding of risks and potential consequences. An updated Irvine Valley Flood Study has been commissioned, with a focus on Kilmarnock. The results of this study are anticipated in autumn 2025.

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support delivery of <b>infrastructure projects</b> to support growth in housing, business and activity within our town centres throughout the day and evening.</li> <li>Implement a range of strategies and plans (<b>Regional Spatial Strategy, NPF4 and LDP</b>) to encourage town centre living and 20 minute neighbourhoods.</li> <li>Work with the <b>Kilmarnock Strategic Group</b> to take forward the strategic vision and action plan for the town.</li> <li>Develop a 10 year plan for the delivery of the £20 million investment in Kilmarnock via the UK Government's <b>Long Term Plan for Towns</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; EALT; CVOEA; KBA; Ayrshire Chamber</p> <p>EAC; community groups</p> <p>EAC; KSG</p> <p>EAC; SE; AC; NHSAA;CoC; SDS</p>



## 2024-25 Update

- Positive progress was made with the Levelling Up funded Cultural Kilmarnock project, with planning and listed building consent granted in December 2024. A request has been made to the UK Government seeking an extension to the March 2026 deadline. [Cultural Kilmarnock Project | East Ayrshire Leisure Trust](#)
- In Kilmarnock town centre, the 'White Tile' building has been sold and Civic Centre North has been leased to a developer with a view to a sale once the building has been redeveloped for office accommodation. Both these projects will facilitate private investment into the town centre and attract new businesses in need of accommodation.
- Demolition of the Kilmarnock multi-storey car park commenced in September 2024. Additional unforeseen asbestos works have been required and as a result, this project is now expected to be completed in Summer 2025. Proposals are being developed for the future redevelopment of the site to link it to the overall active travel, charging and public realm town centre themes. [Multi-storey car park demolition due to start next week | East Ayrshire Council News](#)
- Following a consultation exercise involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders, the Kilmarnock Town Centre Board approved a draft Long Term Plan, setting out its vision, planned interventions and incorporating a 3 year investment plan. This was submitted to the UK Government by its August 2024 deadline. The fund has subsequently been amended by the incoming UK Government to the Plan for Neighbourhoods and a revised prospectus was issued in March 2025. Further capacity funding will be provided during 2025/26, and the Board will submit a regeneration plan in winter 2025 with delivery taking effect in April 2026. [Long-term investment plans for Kilmarnock · East Ayrshire Council](#)



- The Kilmarnock Strategic Group (KSG) meets regularly and is provided with strategic direction by the Kilmarnock Officer Taskforce Group. Officers are currently working with STP/Scottish Futures Trust on a pilot for town centre living. The group is also working alongside We Make Kilmarnock to ensure projects are developed which dovetail and address the aspirations of our communities.

- The East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2), which was adopted in April 2024, is supported by Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions.

This guidance was consulted on, approved and subsequently adopted in October 2024. It sets out a new approach to collecting developer contributions that will support the delivery of infrastructure projects in town centres, where it is evidenced that new development in these areas would put pressure on existing services to an extent that intervention would be required. However, any applications to develop sites on the Vacant and Derelict Land Register will be exempt from providing such contributions, including sites in town centres; this is intended as an incentive for these sites to be redeveloped, in line with wider priorities to bring empty plots and buildings in urban areas back into productive use. LDP2 also contains a suite of policies which support and promote local living, including the principles of 20 minute neighbourhoods (T2), infrastructure first (INF1), compact growth in and around town centres (RES4) and town centre living (TC4).

### 3.3: Innovating to ensure sustainability in partnership services

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Accelerate the digital transition to promote equality, counter social isolation and unlock access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness of the <b>digital skills offer</b> including AI, qualifications and automation to enhance employability.</li> <li>Ayrshire Growth Deal – utilise <b>5G Innovation Region</b> 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.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; AC; SDS</p> <p>EAC; private sector.</p>

#### 2024-25 Update

- The Ayrshire Digital Economy – [5GIR showcase event took place at Ayrshire College, Kilmarnock in November 2024](#), with over 100 attendees. Hosted by the Ayrshire 5GIR Project Board, the event provided an opportunity to enhance collaboration across government, academia and industry leaders.



- Via the UK Government's 5G Innovation Region Fund, the Ayrshire region was awarded £3.791m to drive forward the development and adoption of 5G and other advanced wireless technologies across 5 key project themes. East Ayrshire Council is lead on Project 3 (SME Internet of Things for East Ayrshire Businesses) and was allocated £0.450m. Following a bidding process, six successful bids emerged from manufacturing businesses in East Ayrshire, all of whom received 80% of the total cost of their projects. All six businesses completed their projects by 31 March 2025 and within their allocated grant award. Each has reported wide ranging and immediate benefits, including increased productivity, reduced operating costs, increased efficiency and reduced carbon footprint. [2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update - 2024-25 Annual Business Support Report and 5G Innovation Regions Update.pdf](#)

- The 5GIR fund also provided separate funding for bespoke skills and training development via Project 5 (Digital Ambassador/Immersive Learning). Work is being developed by the University of the West of Scotland and Ayrshire College to deliver collaborative digital training programmes to enhance educational opportunities within the region. The project uses public 5G connectivity to enhance education and training, making learning more interactive, accessible, and tailored to individual needs. Key aspects include remote augmented reality (AR) assessments, and AR-powered tutor support, allowing teachers to guide students remotely in an engaging way. Workers

are benefitting from real-time AR instructions on-site, helping them learn and complete tasks more efficiently. This programme has been extended until September 2025 to allow the development of additional course materials and training for AR and VR equipment.

- The East Ayrshire Digital Access Network (EA-DAN) continues to look at ways of sourcing devices and affordable broadband connectivity for those in our communities who are digitally disconnected. EA-DAN also engage and collaborate with colleagues in North and South Ayrshire Council's, through the 5GIR Project Board, to improve access to and availability of digital connectivity tools across the Ayrshire region.



#### Case study: Scotia Windows and Doors

Scotia Windows and Doors currently employs 175 people at its Moorfield Park base in Kilmarnock. The company successfully secured funding from the 5GIR programme to address a need for improved quality assurance measures at each stage of production, a reduction in manufacturing process waste and improvements to safety, quality and output.

Funding was used to purchase 5G Routers and wireless access points, server stacks and user equipment to enable advanced communication across site. As a result of this investment in the business which would not otherwise have

been able to proceed, efficiency savings have been reported, including a saving of 21 minutes on aborted installation checklist processes, a 75% reduction in paper, optimised energy use and smarter logistics.

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Support the delivery of community ambitions as articulated in Placemaking Plans, Local Place Plans and Community Led Action Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council is actively engaging with a number of communities to advance Placemaking <b>Plans</b>, including Mauchline and Kilmaurs.</li> <li>• With the new legislative footing for <b>Local Place Plans</b>, the Council is reviewing its processes in order to ensure that moving forward, support is targeted to where it is most required.</li> <li>• <b>25 Community Led Action Plans</b> 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.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; community groups.</p> <p>EAC; community groups</p> <p>EAC community groups</p>

## 2024-25 Update

- 7 Local Place Plans (LPPs) have now been adopted, with another at final consultation stage. Further plans are in development and further integration of local place plans with community action plans is planned over the medium term. Work on a pilot for Galston is ongoing.

[Local Place Plans | Engagement East Ayrshire](#)

- As a result of changes in the planning system, placemaking plans are no longer being produced, having been superseded by Local Place Plans. East Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Leisure Trust have worked together to streamline the Community Led Action Plan/ Local Place Plan process to ensure as many communities as possible are able to produce LPPs and can feed into the creation of LDP3. Work is currently ongoing on a number of CAP/LPPs and communities have been invited to prepare their own LPPs by March 2026. The Council's Development Planning and Regeneration and Vibrant Communities Teams will support communities to meet this deadline. Three communities have already registered their intention to prepare a LPP.





## PRIORITY 4: WELLBEING

### Sub priority 4.1: Supporting a holistic life cycle approach to health and wellbeing

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of an inclusive local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued delivery of the <b>Working for a Healthy Economy</b> project to help individuals manage and improve their health to progress or sustain employment. Explore ways to maximise programme reach across our business base.</li> <li>Ensure <b>multi-agency approaches and pathways</b> 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.</li> <li>Develop and sustain opportunities for <b>volunteering</b> in a range of areas including active schools, adult learning, community health and digital skills.</li> </ul>	<p>NHSAA; DWP; EAC</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>EAC; CVO; community groups</p>

#### 2024-25 Update

- By March 2025, 1,985 people across Ayrshire had accessed full management support via telephone and full face to face case management support; 166 unemployed people had returned to work; and 323 employed people had retained employment. A range of events and promotional activities continue to be undertaken in support of the Working for a Healthy Economy project, which is offered to all clients registered by the Council's Employability Service and SL33/SL66.
- The Money MOT programme continued to deliver money lifeskills and financial capabilities/literacies training to adults and families furthest from the labour market, with a specific focus on numeracy. 496 adult learners and 264 children participated in numeracy learning during 2024/25, with 29 adults achieving a maths qualification up to and including level 5.
- During 2024/25, the Council's Vibrant Communities Team provided 8,345 hours of managed volunteering time to local people.
- The Council's Adult Literacies Team continued to deliver 1:1 and HUBs for Dedicated Adult Literacies supports for adults across East Ayrshire during 2024/25. 65 learners were supported with literacy training. [Literacies and learning · East Ayrshire Council](#)
- 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. 202 learners were supported during 2024/25. 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. During summer 2024, the team delivered 34 ESOL classes, 8 Driving Theory classes, 5 Conversation Cafes, 8 Online ESOL classes and 9 Family Learning events, reaching 54 learners and their families. By incorporating family-friendly sessions in the summer timetable, social isolation was reduced and multi-cultural friendships and family learning were fostered. [English for speakers of other languages · East Ayrshire Council](#)

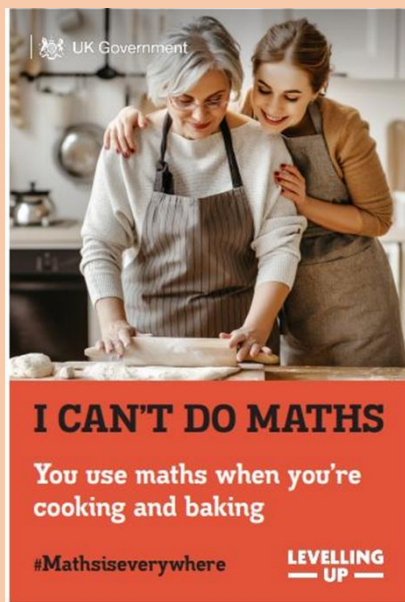


- In October 2024, East Ayrshire Council agreed proposals in respect of funding to third sector partners to support innovative, joined up services that improve family wellbeing, maximise incomes and support people into work. This included match funding a £0.600m contribution from the Scottish Government over two years for an East Ayrshire 'Fairer Futures Partnership', an expansion of place-based child poverty pathfinders. A total of £1.2 million was allocated to CentreStage, The Zone and YipWorld to deliver place-based supports that will reduce poverty, demonstrate fairness, provide skills for learning and work, move individuals into employment and reduce demand in other areas. [Funding secured for vital projects | East Ayrshire Council News](#)

### Case study: Money MOT

The Money MOT course is run by Vibrant Communities within East Ayrshire Council. Its Lifeskills and Inclusion team secured funding through the UK Government Levelling Up Multiply scheme to provide numeracy learning opportunities for parents, families and adults aged 16 and over who live in East Ayrshire. The Money MOT awards, credit-rated by the SQA, are available at SCQF level 3, 4 and 5. The course allows learners to achieve 1 SCQF credit (per award) by undertaking 10 hours of learning and assessment.

The qualification provides support for adults to build confidence and knowledge with numeracy in everyday life, focusing on personal banking, saving, best value shopping, borrowing, paying bills and budgeting.




The Vibrant Communities team takes an asset-based approach to learning, which recognises people's unique personal experiences and builds on their strengths, talents and aspirations. In recognition of their work with Patchwork learners, Money MOT received an award from Scotland's Learning Partnership Adult Learners Award in May 2024. This award recognised the barriers individuals had overcome to participate in learning and the difference it has made to their lives.

*"[Money MOT] showed me I can do anything I can put my mind to. Showed me I can remember things and learning wasn't ever a part of my upbringing. Books were not even in my childhood but now I'm thinking about higher education. All because of this course".*

*"Before the course, I lived day to day and saved nothing. Saving didn't even come into my mind as I didn't think it was possible for someone like me to save and I just lived day to day, but now I plan for my future and budget out my month and I am even able to save a little each month."*

**Money MOT SCQF Level 4 participants**

Action	Partnership Activity	Partners
Work to engage a wider range of organisations to take responsibility for delivering wellbeing across East Ayrshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage anchor organisations to take a more active role in developing new relationships and <b>facilitating wellbeing</b> across public, private, academic and societal players.</li> <li>Development of policy framework across organisations that supports <b>fair work</b> in its broadest context and incorporates a robust staff consultation process, giving the workforce an active voice.</li> <li>Recognise inequalities arising throughout the workforce and proactively delivering interventions to address these through the <b>application of wellbeing</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>EAC; Community Groups; E&amp;S Anchors</p> <p>EAC, SE, Fair Work and Skills Ayrshire, CWB Commission</p> <p>EAC, NHSAA</p>
<b>2024-25 Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Ayrshire Council has developed a range of wellbeing support documents and also uses face-to face methods and e-learning modules to support employee wellbeing across the organisation. Dedicated forums for minorities in the Council's workforce, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME), disabled employees and LGBT employees have been established.</li> <li>During 2024/25, the Fair Work Ayrshire Team worked with local employers who are undertaking Fair Work Action Plans and linked them to employability pipelines and skills development programmes. To date they have assisted 270 businesses to undertake Fair Work Action Plans. <a href="#">Community Wealth Building   Ayrshire Growth Deal</a></li> </ul> <div>  <p>The image shows three people (two women and one man) smiling and holding a large, colorful circular badge that says 'LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER'. They are standing in what appears to be a shop or a community space with various items in the background.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>74 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 2023/24 <a href="#">Employer Directory - Living Wage Scotland</a>. As an accredited Living Wage employer, East Ayrshire Council supported Living Wage week, which ran from November 4-10 2024.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>NHSAA's Workplace Health Team worked closely with the Fair Work team to contribute to the business case that is presented to employers to highlight the health and wellbeing benefits of Fair Work to staff and in turn, productivity. They also worked closely with Emergency One to create a Health Improvement programme that considers a holistic approach to staff health and wellbeing.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>		