

# Annual Report 2024-25



Stirling &  
Clackmannanshire  
City Region Deal

[StirClacksDeal.com](https://www.stirclacksdeal.com)

UNIVERSITY of  
**STIRLING**



**Clackmannanshire  
Council**



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# 1

## Summary



**Date Deal Signed**

26th February 2020



**£90.2 million**

Government Funding Allocation

**£18.05m**

Total claimed in 2024/25



**£34.68m**

Total claimed to date





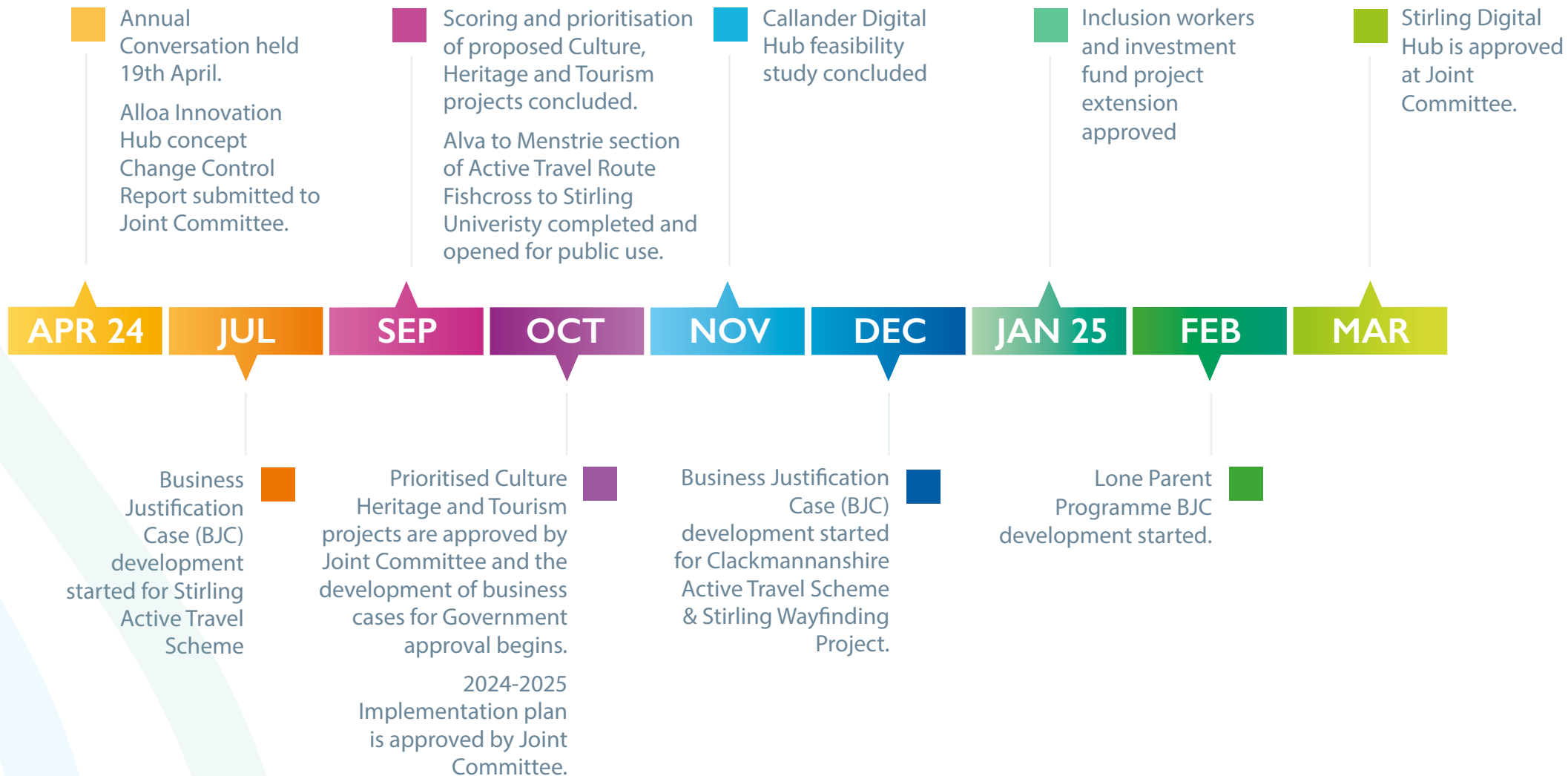


**82 jobs**  
created



**4 Projects in  
implementation/delivery**  
5 projects completed

# Timeline 2024-25





Japanese Gardens outreach and education team activities during 24/25, and the new outreach building



# Foreword

**We are pleased to introduce the 2024-25 Annual Report of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal. Since signing the Deal in February 2020, we have made steady progress in the delivery of our projects and programmes within the six thematic areas. Celebrating our fifth year and halfway point of the Deal, the partnership looks forward to achieving more key milestones in the year ahead and delivering positive outcomes for the people of Stirling and Clackmannanshire. This year's report covers the period April 2024 until end of March 2025.**

The Deal's innovation theme activities aim to drive growth through supporting a thriving knowledge economy across the Forth Valley. Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) aims to build a global exemplar of a net zero regional economy. Development of its world-first environmental infrastructure that will harnesses inward investment is well underway, alongside efforts to engage and upskill the region's communities with the skills and ambition to seize opportunities presented by the transition to a more sustainable economy.

Likewise, construction of the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH) - which will cement the region's position in the vanguard of one of the world's fastest growing sectors - passed several significant milestones and remains on course for completion in winter 2025. Together with the developing plans for the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub, these projects will support jobs and prosperity through responding to major global challenges.

In our digital infrastructure theme, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils continue to make strides in enhancing digital infrastructure across the region. A key initiative in this area is the development of Regional Digital Hubs. These hubs are being strategically located in Cowie, Callander and Alloa to serve communities across The Forth Valley. With the Cowie Digital Hub completed and open to the public, construction is expected to start on the Stirling Digital Hub in Autumn of 2025 following approval of the Business Case by Joint Committee in March 2025.

Under our transport and connectivity theme, we continue to expand our strategic network of Active Travel schemes, enhancing transport connectivity, promoting low carbon initiatives and boosting economic activity within the region. Following the opening of Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling, which has created two new cycling, walking and wheeling corridors of more than 6.9 km across the city, two other routes are scheduled to move to delivery stage this year: Dunblane to Causewayhead and Fishcross to the University of Stirling. Both of these await approval at our Joint Committee later in the year. These transport corridors will connect communities in the region and open up access to destinations such as workplaces and businesses, schools, further and higher education settings, public transport hubs and visitor attractions.

In the culture and tourism theme, the completed project of the Japanese Gardens at Cowden, remains a popular tourist attraction for residents and visitors, who have praised the serene and picturesque environment.



Through the £750,000 investment from the City Region Deal, the Gardens have been restored to a high standard and are popular for daytrips and a wide range of cultural events. We continue to monitor and evaluate the benefits the gardens are contributing to the area and are delighted that annual targets of 25,000 visitors have been exceeded with over 49,000 people visiting the gardens this year.

As we approach the middle of 2025, we are committed to working together to ensure new projects coming into delivery in the rest of the year and beyond are propelled forwards through robust and strategic business case development. While good progress continues to be made on a number of projects, we must remain ready to respond to changes in the external landscape to maximise the benefits of the Deal, including the creation of higher-value jobs, attracting inward investment and developing centres of excellence.

We continue to press forward with our programme in the next 12 months driven by a determination to continue unlocking the benefits of the Deal and make a real difference to the people, communities and businesses of Stirling and Clackmannanshire.



**Councillor  
Ellen Forson, Leader**  
Clackmannanshire  
Council



**Councillor  
Gerry McGarvey, Leader**  
Stirling Council



**Professor  
Sir Gerry McCormac**  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor,  
The University of Stirling

# City Region Deal Overview

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal is an exciting package of investment in innovation, infrastructure and skills intended to drive inclusive economic growth to the city region. The UK Government and Scottish Government will each invest £45.1 million over the lifetime of the ten-year programme. In conjunction with this Government investment, regional partners will invest up to £123.8 million, realising a Deal worth £214 million for Stirling and Clackmannanshire. City Region partners have an ambition that the interventions created by this investment will help regional partners build on their existing strengths and ensure the region is able to deliver on its vision.

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal partnership is driven by Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council, the University of Stirling, the Scottish Government and UK Government. The investment offered, by Scottish and UK Governments through the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, is expected to act as a catalyst and accelerator for our ambitious programme. It is designed to unlock investment from within our region and beyond.

Theme	No of programmes /projects	Total Government Investment
Transport, Connectivity and Low Carbon	3	£7,200,000
Innovation	4	£56,250,000
Skills and Inclusion	3	£2,000,000
Infrastructure	1	£5,000,000
Culture, Heritage and Tourism	2	£15,750,000
Digital	4	£4,000,000



The interventions and approaches within the Deal will deliver inclusive growth to benefit the people and communities across Stirling and Clackmannanshire.

The Deal was signed on 26th February 2020, and this annual report will summarise the progress made in the financial year April 2024 – March 2025. The Deal is based around six themes designed to deliver programmes and projects to deliver the four strategic outcomes.

**The six themes are:**

- Innovation
- Digital
- Culture, Heritage & Tourism
- Transport, Connectivity & Low Carbon
- Infrastructure
- Skills & Inclusion

Widen access to opportunity through inclusive skills pathways that target those who face exclusion across our region.

Create conditions for businesses to thrive both locally and globally, increase job density and access to opportunity, maximising our regional assets.

Remove barriers to engagement and support inclusion to share prosperity and wellbeing across the region.

Invest in the creation of clean, green innovations, digital entrepreneurship and cultural opportunities to deliver a more diverse regional economy.





## 4

## Geographical Overview

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire city region is at the heart of Scotland, with it often being referred to as Scotland in miniature. Natural beauty abounds, with the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park to the West, the silvery River Forth to the South and the majestic Ochil Hills rising in the North.

The City Region consists of two local authority areas and has a combined population of approximately 145,000 people. The City Region contributes over £3.6 billion per year to the Scottish and UK economies, with the main economic sectors including tourism, retail, manufacturing and agriculture. It is also home to the University of Stirling, one of Scotland's leading higher educational institutions, and the campuses of Forth Valley College.

The Deal also looks beyond the region, to link up with other Growth Deals including the Tay Cities Deal, Edinburgh and Southeast Scotland City Region Deal and the Glasgow City Region Deal. Similarly, through the University of Stirling, links have been established with the Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute Growth Deals. There are also emerging connections between the Falkirk Growth Deal and our own, which follow the Falkirk Growth Deal signing. The Regional Programme Management Office is fully integrated into the City and Growth Deal network, where good practice is shared and connections are made to support cumulative benefits.





**The Deal is based around 6 themes:**

- Innovation
- Digital
- Culture, Heritage & Tourism
- Transport, Connectivity & Low Carbon
- Infrastructure
- Skills & Inclusion

These themes provide the framework for a number of transformational programmes that will allow the investment of the Scottish and UK Governments through the Deal to unlock investment from within our region and beyond. The aspiration of partners is to deliver throughout the life of the Deal the realisation of economic and social benefits for our communities, citizens and businesses. Collectively the partnership is determined to build community wealth, ensure inclusive growth, drive towards a net zero future, and ensure the city region grows to be stronger and fairer for all.



## 5

## Financial Statement

The overall Deal is worth £214 million, with investment of £45.1 million from Scottish Government, £45.1 million from UK Government and a further £123.8 million funding from third party partners. Table 1 (on p13) shows the Financial Summary by project for the Deal, based on the most up-to-date financial information.

As can be seen from the table 1, the main projects to draw down funding are the National Aquaculture and Innovation Hub (NATIH), Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1, as well as our Inclusion Workers and Investment Fund and our Flexible Skills Programme. More of this funding will become fully secured as more business cases are approved, and more projects move into delivery.

Funding draw down shown in table 2 shows the total claims made in 2024-2025 programme/project.



**Table 1 – Overall Funding Breakdown**

Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Financial Summary						
Programme/Project	Scottish Government £	UK Government £	Regional Partners £	Other Partners £	Commercial Partners £	Total £
<b>Total Transport, Connectivity &amp; Low Carbon</b>	7,200,000	0	325,000	19,439,000	0	26,964,000
Active Travel Programme	4,461,000	0	0	10,719,000	0	15,180,000
Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling	2,539,000	0	325,000	8,720,000	0	11,584,000
Energy Master Planning	200,000	0	0	0	0	200,000
<b>Total Innovation</b>	17,000,000	39,250,000	653,821	18,954,000	15,855,833	97,643,654
The National Aquaculture Technology & Innovation Hub (NATIH)	0	17,000,000	6,543,821	1,000,000	5,133,833	29,677,654
Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1	9,704,000	5,000,000	0	0	10,722,000	25,426,000
SIEC Phase 2 & Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub (ILIH)	7,296,000	7,250,000	0	17,954,000	0	32,500,000
Replacement Innovation Project	0	10,000,000	40,000	0	0	10,040,000
<b>Total Skills &amp; Inclusion</b>	1,900,000	100,000	0	313,000	0	2,313,000
Flexible Skills	1,503,000	0	0	0	0	1,503,000
Inclusion Workers & Investment Fund	397,000	0	0	313,000	0	710,000
Clackmannanshire Lone Parents Programme	0	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
<b>Total Infrastructure</b>	0	5,000,000	0	16,100,000	0	21,100,000
Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside	0	5,000,000	0	16,100,000	0	21,100,000
<b>Total Culture, Heritage &amp; Tourism</b>	15,000,000	750,000	1,000,000	362,000	786,000	17,898,000
Developing Cultural, Heritage & Tourism Assets Programme	15,000,000	0	1,000,000	0	0	16,000,000
Japanese Gardens	0	750,000	0	362,000	786,000	1,898,000
<b>Total Digital</b>	4,000,000	0	241,000	1,352,000	0	5,593,000
Stirling Digital Hub	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	2,000,000
Regional Digital Hub Programme	2,000,000	0	241,000	1,352,000	0	3,593,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	£45,100,000	£45,100,000	£8,149,821	£56,520,000	16,641,833	£171,511,654

**Table 2** – Financial Drawdown Summary

Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Claim position for 2024-25		
Project	Total Grant Claims drawn down 24/25	Total Grant Claim available at start of 24/25
<b>Innovation</b>		
National Aquaculture Technology & Innovation Hub (NATIH)	10,297,657	10,297,657
Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1	2,614,748	3,169,387
<b>Skills &amp; Inclusion</b>		
Flexible Skills	67,069	200,000
Inclusion & Investment Fund	78,853	86,000
<b>Infrastructure</b>		
Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside	5,000,000	5,000,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£18,058,327</b>	<b>£18,753,044</b>





# 6

## Deal Governance and Management

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal has been in operation since February 2020, underpinned by a suite of governance documents which facilitate management of the programme. The Joint Committee has the ultimate say over key strategic decision-making required to support the Deal and the wider strategy. The Joint Committee is comprised of elected members from Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and senior representatives from the University of Stirling, providing a diverse range of views and ensuring representation from across the partnership.

The Regional Programme Management Office (RPMO) meets the UK Government and Scottish Government on a fortnightly basis to discuss progress as well as quarterly to review performance and plan ahead for future activity.



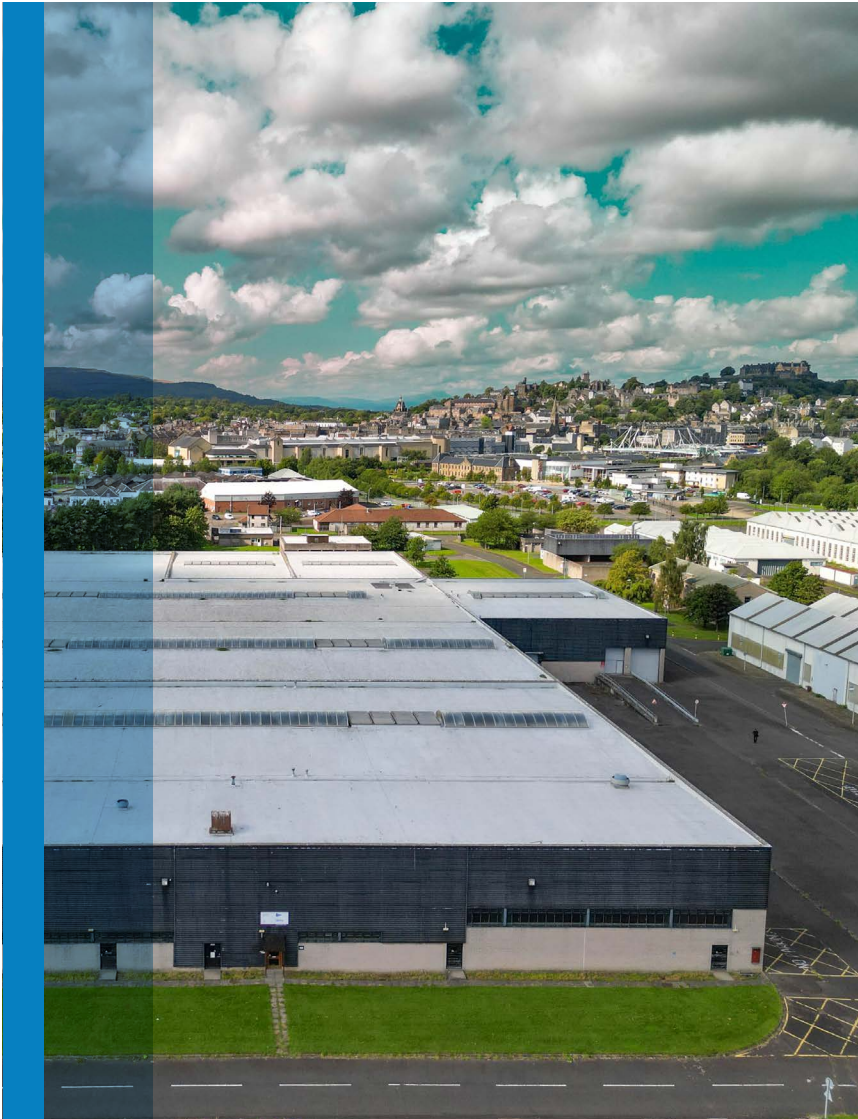
The governance structure of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal is illustrated in the diagram below:





## 7

# Benefits Realisation Plan



One aim of the City Region Deal investment is to deliver sustainable new employment opportunities across a range of sectors as well as unlocking private investment. Every effort is being made to maximise the benefits from the Deal's projects. A key aspect of managing the Deal is the development of a benefits realisation plan to ensure close monitoring of the benefits being realised.

The following tables on *p19 - p24* summarise the progress that has been made in realising some of the key benefits for projects which are either completed or in delivery. Data included is in reference to the 2024-2025 financial year, unless otherwise specified.

## Japanese Gardens - Benefits Realisation

Outcome		Detail	Target	24/25 Total
1	Visitors	The Japanese Garden will sustain significantly higher visitor numbers than set out in the original business plan. The garden will secure at least 25,000 visits each year, 375,000 visits over the next 15 years.	25,000 visitors per annum	49,628 visitors
2	Restoration	The Tea House and surrounding area will be restored, recreating the Garden's original boathouse (before the 2022 season). At least half of all visitors to the JG will engage with interactive displays and events based at the tea house.	12,500 visitors to the Tea House per annum	All visitors to the garden access the Tea House, which is open all day. (49,628 visitors)
3	Employment Opportunities	The Japanese Garden will be able to sustain at least 30 employment opportunities each year (including seasonal workers), at least 450 person-years of employment over 15 years.	30 employment opportunities per annum	32 employment opportunities
4a	Shared Prosperity Agenda	The Japanese Garden will work closely with City Region Deal partners to ensure that all the 450 person-years of employment opportunities (over 15 years) are considered within the shared prosperity agenda and inclusive skills ecosystem.		The Japanese Garden provides employment opportunities for underrepresented groups, is a flexible employer, provides training and the garden is fully accessible.
5a	Volunteering, Learning and Work Experience Opportunities	The Japanese Garden will provide at least 500 volunteering, learning and work experience opportunities each year (7,500 opportunities over 15 years). This includes regular garden volunteers, horticultural & work experience students, an extended commitment to focused local community outreach and special interest group activities, as well as a structured programme for school group engagement.	500 opportunities per annum	2606 opportunities
5b	Volunteering, Learning and Work Experience Opportunities	The Japanese Garden will secure 1,200 volunteer hours each year (18,000 hours over 15 years).	1,200 volunteer hours per annum	747 volunteer hours



## Japanese Gardens - Benefits Realisation

Outcome		Detail	Target	Total
6	Sustainable Development	Sustainable development will be placed at the heart of the Japanese Garden. Buildings and facilities will be developed with most building materials from sustainable sources from within Scotland. This approach will be embedded in procurement and confirmed in project reports.*	-	26 local suppliers
7a	Regional Partnerships	Over the 15 years of the City Region Deal the Japanese Garden will maintain 70 active regional partnerships (including regional businesses, tourism organisations and events to raise the profile of the region). Active partnerships will be maintained through events and activities at the Garden.	Maintain 70 Regional Partnerships over 15 years	35
7b	Special Events	Over the 15 years of the City Region Deal the Japanese Garden will hold at least 10 special events each year (150 over 15 years) including weddings, other ceremonies and festivals. This will help to showcase the natural assets of the city region and build repeat tourism.	Host 10 special events per annum	56

\*Note: All totals for the Japanese Gardens with the exception of Outcome 6, are what has been achieved in the 24/25 financial year. Outcome 6 is a cumulative total.

## SIEC Phase 1 – Benefits Realisation

Data for SIEC Phase 1 benefits is cumulative since the launch of SIEC.

Outcome	Detail	Target	Total
1	Support organisations enabling the development of innovative environmental, low carbon technologies, products and services.	300 by 2035	32
2	Support entrepreneurs to develop cutting edge environmental and low carbon products and services.	100 by 2035	14
3	Adopt progressive procurement practices spending at least 38% of SIEC operating costs within the city region.	38% by 2035	-
4	Create jobs within the city region encouraging Fair Work practices.	125 by 2035	38
5	Develop industry led collaborations to co-produce innovative environmental management and low carbon solutions.	100 by 2035	13
6	Support organisations in the city region to reduce their net carbon emissions.	300 by 2035	54
7	Support people to engage in the SIEC skills portfolio enabling access to accredited training in Net Zero related subjects including environmental management, sustainability and Data Driven Innovation.	8805 by 2035	118
8	Provide skills and training opportunities targeting underrepresented groups in the city region Supporting women and people with a disability.	4403 and 1799 by 2035	12
9	Provide inspiring opportunities for employability, school, college and university students to engage with industry on their journey to employment.	948 by 2035	173

### Ministry of Defence, Forthside – Benefits Realisation agreed within CRD

Outcome	Detail	Target
1	<b>Direct Land Value Uplift:</b> estimated at £1.4 million after 10 years	£1.4 million in 10 years
2	<b>Labour Supply Impacts:</b> in the form of Productivity gains of over £10 million due to more productive jobs. This stems from the creation of 1,000 additional jobs over the 30-year appraisal period in the city (these are likely to be of a mix depending on the companies that take space but geared towards light manufacturing, potential for high-value industry)	1,000 Jobs in 30 years
3	<b>Amenity Benefits:</b> worth £7.4m as regeneration will follow placemaking principles to opening up the site to existing and new communities, allowing local consultation, as well as improving access to the river and enhancing the natural environment to create improved urban realm. The development will support 180 sustainable and affordable housing units within Forthside.	180 affordable housing units
4	<b>Carbon and Energy Savings:</b> as a result of connection to the Forthside District Heat Network that has capacity to distribute sufficient energy to save 255tonnes of CO2 per annum.	Save 255 tonnes of CO2 per annum
5	<b>Enhancement in Natural Capital:</b> potential to utilise areas of the site(s) and riverside for environmental enhancement, biodiversity gain, carbon capture and flood resilience.	
6	<b>Social and Recreational Value:</b> that reduces socio-economic inequalities and avoids impacts of blight (site becoming derelict for years to come) and associated economic loss compared to economic activity previously supported through MOD and the defence sector. This includes creation of new residential and business communities, providing a variety of public realm improvements and new active travel network.	
7	<b>Crime Impacts:</b> a reduction in crime associated with urban decay will avoid economic, fiscal and social costs to the public sector related to that crime.	

## Cowie Regional Digital Hub – Benefits Realisation

Outcome	Strategic Objective Alignment	Cowie Digital Regional Hub Objectives (over 15 years)	Activities	Indicators
1	Shared Prosperity	To enable start-up, existing, and incoming businesses to have access to good quality, digitally enabled, flexible office space which is nearby their preferred location.	High-quality and digitally enabled business space is delivered through the Cowie hub.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustain an average of 20 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs through the Cowie hub.</li> <li>10 of these Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs through the Cowie hub covered by Fair Work and Environmental pledges or commitments.</li> <li>Over 15 years, 80 start-up companies supported through the Cowie hub.</li> <li>Impact on performance of businesses based at the Cowie hub including measurable differences, intended and unintended outcomes.</li> </ul>
2	Higher Value Jobs Inclusive Economic Growth	To provide supportive and collaborative business environments that enable sustainable business development and nourish economic growth.	Business support tailored to digital technology companies is developed and delivered through the Cowie hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support 150 organisations enabling the development of digital technology within their businesses.</li> <li>No of businesses exporting products or services; broken down into markets.</li> <li>Support 15 entrepreneurs to develop innovative digital products and services.</li> <li>Impact on organisations receiving support including measurable differences, intended and unintended outcomes.</li> </ul>
3	Inclusive Economic Growth Inclusive Skills Ecosystem	To ensure that inclusive growth is delivered by optimising contributions to skills and inclusion by all business support interventions.	Strong regional skills pathways will be developed to ensure that our most excluded communities can access a streamlined educational journey and inclusion support to realise their potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support 800 people from the communities around Cowie to enable access to skills and training in digital technology related subjects including digital skills and data driven innovation.</li> <li>Provide skills and training opportunities targeting underrepresented groups in the city region supporting 400 women and 1,000 people with a disability.</li> <li>Provide 250 inspiring opportunities for employability, school, college and university students to engage with the digital technology industry on their journey to employment.</li> <li>Provide inspiring opportunities for employability, school, college and university students to engage with the digital technology industry on their journey to employment for 125 women and 50 people with a disability.</li> <li>Impact on performance of businesses based at the Cowie hub including measurable differences, intended and unintended outcomes.</li> </ul>



## Inclusion Workers & Investment Fund – Benefits Realisation

Outcomes	Strategic Objective Alignment	Detail	Target 24/25	Achieved 24/25
1	<b>Shared Prosperity:</b> Remove barriers to engagement and support inclusion to share prosperity and wellbeing across the region	Number of people receiving support from inclusion workers	70	90
2		Number reporting gains in soft outcomes	40	73
3		Number reporting barrier alleviated	20	48
4		Number participating in accredited learning	20	17*
5		Number progressing from Inclusion Worker Project to employability support	40	10*

\*Note: These figures recognise that project participants have presented with significantly more multiple barriers to participation than expected and therefore their progression to accredited learning or employability support takes longer.



# 1

## DRIVERS

- Strong digital economic base in Stirling
- Strong culture heritage and tourism offer
- World leading University in areas including environmental protection, technologies and change
- Home to the UK's leading centre for aquaculture research (University of Stirling)
- Areas of low job density
- Low quality, low value jobs
- Community exclusion (neighbourhood level)
- Groups across the region experiencing inequality



# 2

## DEAL OUTPUTS

- Scotland's International Environment Centre
- The National Aquaculture Innovation and Research Hub
- Stirling Digital District & Regional Digital Hubs
- Culture Heritage and Tourism Programme
- Capital Fund for Clackmannanshire
- CRD Skills and Inclusion investment
- CRD Transport, Connectivity and Low Carbon investment
- CRD Infrastructure investment



# 3

## ENABLERS

- Regional Economic Strategy\*
- Regional Procurement Strategy\*
- Regional Skills Strategy\*



# 4

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- Inclusive economic growth
- Higher value jobs
- Shared prosperity
- Inclusive skills ecosystem

Whilst there are many benefits the City Region Deal will provide, all programmes and projects are aligned and will be evaluated in accordance with our four key strategic outcomes, described in more detail using our SMART Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Outcomes	SMART Strategic Objective
<b>Inclusive Economic Growth (IEG)</b>  Create conditions for businesses to thrive both locally and globally, increase job density and access to opportunity, maximising our regional assets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will create conditions for businesses to be more resilient and thrive both locally and globally</li> <li>2. We will support the creation and retention of jobs promoting Fair Work</li> <li>3. We will maximise our regional assets to increase the economic impact of visitors on our regional economy</li> <li>4. We will support our regional supply chain through the use of progressive procurement</li> </ol>
<b>Higher value jobs (HVJ)</b>  Invest in the creation of clean, green innovations, digital entrepreneurship and cultural opportunities to deliver a more diverse regional economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will support an increase in the proportion of jobs within the region offering the Real Living Wage or higher</li> <li>2. We will support an increase in entrepreneurship and business start-ups across the region</li> <li>3. We will support an increase of the number of higher value jobs within the region as a proportion of all jobs</li> </ol>
<b>Shared prosperity (SP)</b>  Remove barriers to engagement and support inclusion to share prosperity and wellbeing across the region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will support improving access to employment and Fair Work opportunities particularly for communities facing exclusion within the region</li> <li>2. We will support improving access to employment and Fair Work for people within the region currently facing labour market exclusion due to specific circumstances or characteristics</li> <li>3. We will reduce the region's dependence on fossil fuels and diversify our approach to its energy requirements</li> <li>4. We will deliver our projects in accordance with the shared regional commitment to a Net Zero economy</li> </ol>
<b>Inclusive skills ecosystem (ISE)</b>  Widen access to opportunity through inclusive skills pathways that target those who face exclusion across our region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will support the creation of a range of educational opportunities for employability, school, college and university students to engage with industry supporting their journey to employment</li> <li>2. We will support improved access to skills, education and training opportunities for those who face exclusion or are at risk of exclusion from the labour market</li> <li>3. We will provide opportunities for under-represented groups in key industries within the City Region Deal</li> </ol>





## Progress To Date

**Building on the significant progress outlined in the previous Annual Report, the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region programme continued with the positive working approach adopted by the partners to address significant external factors and challenges affecting the Deal throughout 2024 and 2025, none more so than the lasting economic conditions of increased inflation and the legacy of COVID-19. The partners, RPMO and both governments, remain committed to addressing these challenges. This year has seen continued advancement of the Deal's aims.**

Progress to date has been both encouraging and impactful, as we continue to lay the foundations for long-term success across our portfolio of projects. We were proud to mark the opening of the active travel link between Alva to Menstrie in September 2024 as well as Walk Cycle Live Stirling project which was completed at the end of the Financial Year. These are important milestones enabling and encouraging active travel and sustainable transport across the region. These achievements sit alongside our completed projects, including Cowie Digital Hub. Now fully operational, the Hub offers vital digital access and support to its communities. Our Japanese Gardens project, including the beautifully restored gardens, continue to enhance

cultural and visitor engagement across the Forth Valley, with more than 49,628 visitors last year. We also have successfully completed the transfer of land on the MOD site, unlocking prosperous development opportunities for this centrally located space. Additionally, our Energy Masterplan work has been completed, laying the groundwork for a more resilient and sustainable future in the energy sector.

These completions demonstrate our commitment to delivery and positive transformation of the region. The projects to date have already supported the creation of 82 new jobs across the region. Combined with the ongoing contribution to skills and training through Scotland's International Environment Centre, the impact and community value that the Deal is generating is clear. The jobs created span a range of sectors, from digital and innovation to tourism and infrastructure, helping to level up our local economy. These numbers will only rise further as projects in delivery progress, and further projects move into implementation phase.

## Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Regional Deal: At a Glance

Theme	Programme/Project	Stage
<b>A. Transport, Connectivity &amp; Low Carbon</b>	Active Travel Programme	Business cases being progressed
	Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling	Completed
	Energy Master Planning	Completed
<b>B. Innovation</b>	National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub	Implementation (Delivery)
	Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1	Implementation (Delivery)
	Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 2	Under Review
	Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub	Under Review
	Innovation Project	Under Review
<b>C. Skills and Inclusion</b>	Flexible Skills	Implementation (Delivery)
	Inclusion Workers and Investment Fund	Implementation (Delivery)
	Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Programme	Business cases being progressed
<b>D. Infrastructure</b>	Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside	Completed
<b>E. Culture, Heritage and Tourism</b>	Developing Culture, Heritage and Tourism Assets Programme	Business cases being progressed
	Japanese Gardens	Completed
<b>F. Digital</b>	Stirling Digital Hub	Implementation (Delivery)
	Regional Digital Hub – Cowie	Completed
	Regional Digital Hub – Callander	Business case being progressed
	Regional Digital Hub – Clackmannanshire	Under review

## A Transport Connectivity and Low Carbon

### 1. Active Travel Programme

Lead Partners		Stirling Council			Clackmannanshire Council	
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners		Other Partners	Total funds	
£4,500,000	-	-		£10,719,000	£15,180,000	

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Completed programme review, first Business Justification Case submitted to Government for endorsement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Approval of BJC at Joint Committee, Summer 2025</li></ul>

The strategic vision for the Active Travel Routes Programme is for Stirling and Clackmannanshire to be an exemplar for active travel culture as we collectively seek to address the global climate emergency. The Active Travel Routes Programme, and the schemes within, will be a key component of the active travel network in the Deal area. The Programme will deliver a step change in active travel culture, making travel by walking, cycling, and wheeling for people of all ages and abilities easier in Stirling, Clackmannanshire, and beyond.





The Active Travel programme is an investment in new dedicated walking, cycling, and wheeling infrastructure. Improving active travel options in Stirling, Clackmannanshire, and the wider region, specifically connecting communities and public transport destinations to further and higher education facilities, will encourage those travelling to those destinations to choose active travel rather than the car.

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire CRD also highlights the economic importance of investment in active travel, recognising its ability to improve regional connectivity between local authority areas and among rural communities, providing better access to employment and education as well as increasing tourism opportunities with connections to existing National Cycle Network.

## Headline Achievements

This year, work has focused on reviewing the priority routes for the programme and developing the associated Business Justification Cases. The Business Justification Case for Dunblane to Causewayhead has been drafted and submitted to Government for review. The first phase of construction connecting Causewayhead with Bridge of Allan is programmed for 25/26.

For the Active Travel Scheme for Fishcross to Stirling University, with the first phase of this project from Alva to Menstrie being complete, we are moving into the development of our second phase of this project- the route between Fishcross to the University of Stirling, with our Business Justification Case in Development.

Looking to the year ahead, the second phase of this project – will see the Fishcross to University of Stirling phase commencing, with the Business Justification Case, being taken to Joint Committee for approval in Summer 2025. Detailed design, land acquisition and consultation processes are to be completed this year.

The design and route options for the second project, which is the route between Alloa and Stirling, are being progressed.



## 2. Walk Cycle Live Stirling

Lead Partner		Stirling Council		
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
£2,539,000	-	£325,000	£8,720,000	£11,584,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project completed April 2025</li> </ul>	

**Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling** has created two new cycling, walking and wheeling corridors of more than 6.5 km that connect communities, businesses and higher education institutes across the city.

The £11 million project is a cornerstone of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal.

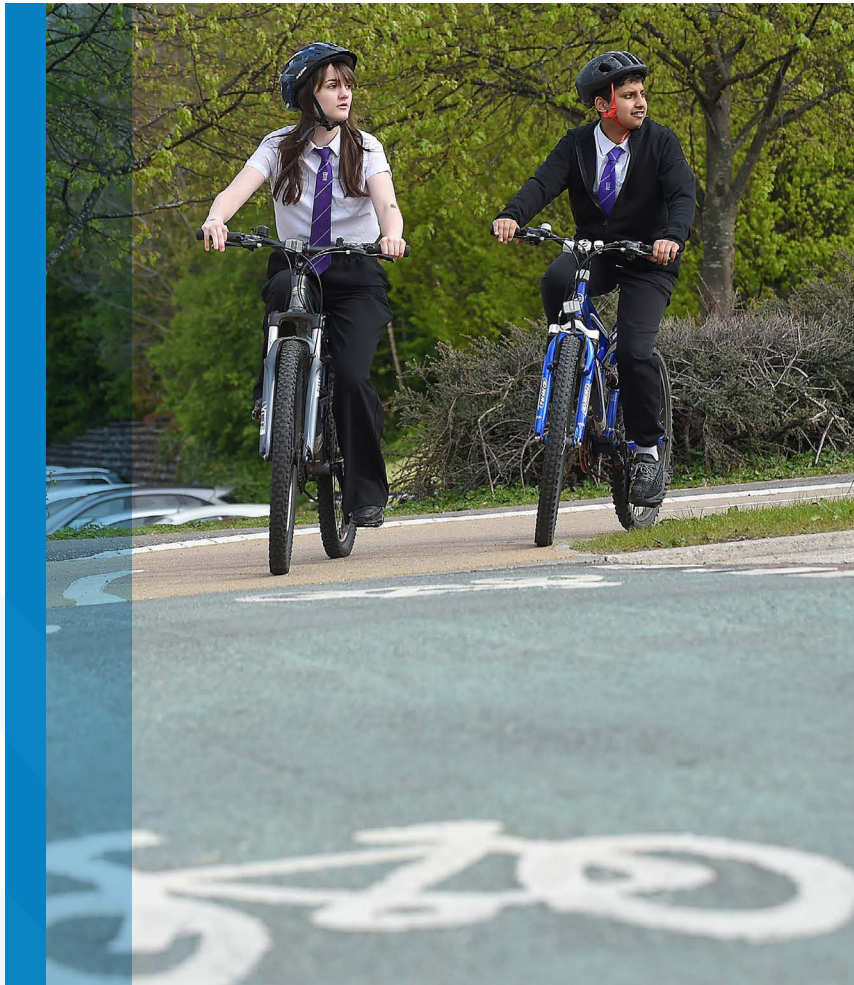
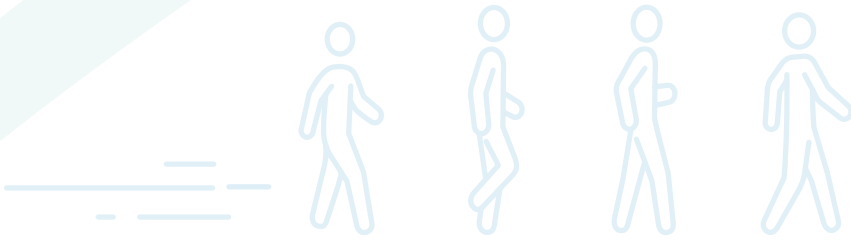
It has been funded by the Scottish Government through Sustrans' Places for Everyone programme (£8.4 million) and via the City Region Deal (£2.5 million), and by Stirling Council from developer contributions (£325,000).

**Route one** links Stirling Train Station and the University of Stirling, taking in iconic landmarks like Old Stirling Bridge and the National Wallace Monument along the way.

**Route two** has bridged the gaps between Forth Valley College and Stirling's historic city centre under the shadow of Stirling Castle.

The new infrastructure will also lay the foundations for future connections to Clackmannanshire and the wider Forth Valley region, and support the objectives of Stirling Council's Climate and Nature Emergency Plan.

The project was completed at the end of the Financial Year and officially opened on the 24th April at a key section of the route next to Wallace High School.



### 3. Regional Energy Masterplan

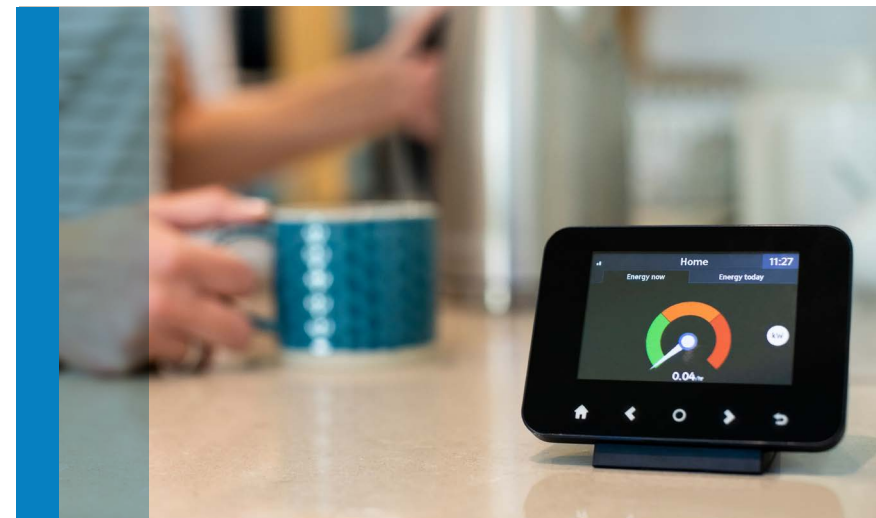
Lead Partner		Stirling Council			Clackmannanshire Council
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners		Other Partners	Total funds
£200,000	-	-		-	£200,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project completed in 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Regional Energy Masterplan is now complete - projects will be funded and progressed outwith the City Region Deal</li> </ul>

The Regional Energy Masterplan (REM) for the Forth Valley area is central to the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region response to the global climate emergency. Energy consumption is the largest contributor of the region's carbon emissions: the development of this masterplan is therefore critical to our strategy for tackling this issue.

The City Regional Deal allocated £200,000 of funding to provide a Regional Energy Masterplan for the Stirling and Clackmannanshire Regions. The REM has produced a prioritised programme of future low- carbon energy projects.



It provides a strategic overview of the wider city region, assessing energy consumption needs and opportunities to assist in the ongoing transition to a low carbon region in the heart of Scotland, focusing on the key areas of:

- Energy Efficiency
- Heat Management
- Renewable Generation
- Sequestration

The projects, interventions and activities identified within the REM will be staged over a 22-year programme, in five-year phases.

Projects are prioritised based on agreed weightings, in line with local and national priorities and targets. Socio- economic assessments ensure investment in infrastructure that brings direct benefits to our communities, including fuel poverty reduction, carbon emissions reduction and regeneration of localities, as well as providing a more resilient and reliable energy supply.





## B Innovation

### 1. The National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH)

Lead Partner		University of Stirling			
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Commerical Partners	Total funds
-	£17,000,000	£6,543,821	£1,000,000	£5,133,833	£29,677,654

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facility fully wind and watertight</li> <li>Specialist equipment partially installed</li> <li>Commissioning plan in place and approved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practical Completion – August 2025</li> <li>Commissioning – August 2025</li> <li>Facility fully operational – winter 2025</li> </ul>

N NATIH is a pioneering innovation centre set-up to drive the UK's ambitions to become a world leader in modern aquaculture practice. Part of the University of Stirling's internationally renowned Institute of Aquaculture, the facility is budgeted to cost £20.7m, funded by the UK Government (£17m), Wolfson Foundation (£1m), and the University of Stirling (£2.7m).

The NATIH facility sits within a wider NATIH project, estimated at £29.7m. To date the £17m of UK Government funding has helped to raise a total of £7.5m, comprising £1m from Wolfson, and a further total investment by the University of £6.5m.

Construction of the new facility is well underway. A significant milestone was marked in November 2024 with a commemorative steel beam signing, when NATIH entered the final phase of construction. Installation of specialist equipment is now underway, ahead of practical completion and commissioning.

Efforts remain focused on the delivery of benefits and the successful commercialisation of these new assets, which will drive NATIH's pioneering work.





## 2. Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1

Lead Partner		University of Stirling				Clackmannanshire Council	
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners		Other Partners		Commercial Partners	Total funds
£9,704,000	5,000,000	£1,000,000		£2,556,000		£10,722,000	£25,426,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<b>Data Centre:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Centre Landing Zone build completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete satellite data services deployment to Data Centre</li> </ul>
<b>Forth Environmental Resilience Array (Forth-Era):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced 3DEO Visualisation &amp; Multi Dashboard Development</li> <li>Deployed 78.5% of sensor installations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete deployment of sensor installations.</li> <li>Operationalisation of Forth ERA</li> </ul>
<b>Business Accelerator:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered training for carbon accounting and Net Zero carbon accounting for SMEs in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits delivery plan</li> <li>Commercialisation of Forth ERA</li> </ul>



## Forth Environmental Resilience Array

The Forth Environmental Resilience Array (Forth ERA) is a first of its kind digital observatory of the Firth of Forth's entire water catchment. A living laboratory providing environmental data and analytics, Forth ERA will facilitate world-leading scientific research, promote more efficient environmental management and regulation, and stimulate business innovation in support of Scotland's transition to net zero.

Forth ERA is at the heart of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's pioneering Satellite Emergency Mapping System (SEMS), launched in September 2024, that is revolutionising the way that Scotland responds to emergencies such as floods, wildfires, landslides, and oil spills. Forth ERA's pioneering infrastructure continues to expand, and its environmental data will be complemented by social data thanks to a £5m Local Policy and Innovation Partnership to explore how water resources in Scotland can promote better outcomes for our economy, society, and the environment.

## Young Pathfinders

Young Pathfinders is an educational outreach programme, which empowers young people from Stirling and Clackmannanshire to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by Scotland's transition to Net Zero.



The innovative, extra-curricular programme, which concluded in spring 2025, culminated with its largest cohort so far – bringing together 30 students from schools across Clackmannanshire and Stirling. The programme, along with the success of pupils involved, has been celebrated in the Scottish Parliament.

## Business Accelerator

SIEC's Business Accelerator supports entrepreneurs at all stages of their journey, from start-ups developing green ventures to supporting existing business to meet Scotland's targets to achieve Net Zero by 2045. This is undertaken through a combination of training, knowledge transfer, businesses advice, and sustainability and carbon management planning.

The Accelerator also leads on the delivery of the SIEC benefits, and the commercialisation of SIEC's activity, building a supportive ecosystem that delivers a low carbon economy for the benefit of the entire region.



### 3. SIEC phase 2 & Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub

Lead Partner		University of Stirling			Clackmannanshire Council
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners		Other Partners	Total funds
£7,296,000	£7,250,000	-		£17,954,000	£32,500,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A refreshed proposition has been prepared which will allow the development of business cases once it has been agreed with partner organisations and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree the proposition.</li> <li>Options appraisal to be undertaken.</li> <li>Submission of a Formal Change Control Request.</li> <li>Submit Outline Business Case</li> </ul>

#### Alloa Innovation Campus

Progress has been achieved in advancing the concept of an Alloa Innovation Campus, which will bring together ILIH, the second phase of SIEC, Clackmannanshire's Digital Hub and Culture, Heritage & Tourism projects. Combined, the four projects focus on addressing two of society's biggest challenges: an ageing population and climate change. A proposal to deliver this element of the Deal has been prepared and is under internal review. The next steps will be to develop this further with our Deal partners.



The convergence of the climate crisis, demographic shifts, and technological advancements has created both unprecedented challenges and remarkable opportunities for the Forth Valley region.

Rather than viewing ageing populations and environmental sustainability as separate challenges, this approach recognises their profound interconnectedness and the opportunities that emerge from those intersections. The resulting 'Sustainable Living' concept offers a future where people across the lifespan can experience improved health and increased prosperity through the thoughtful utilisation of natural resources and materials to construct resilient communities.

This project seeks to address the many social challenges associated with growing older, including health inequalities, social isolation, and loss of identity while, at the same time, being respectful of our environment and communities. This will be accomplished by driving innovations through design, intergenerational integration, and opportunities in the circular economy.

## Research and Policy Centre

As part of the initial proposal, a Research and Policy Centre was proposed to provide a home to bring together researchers, industry, policymakers, regulators, environmental interest groups, and communities. The scope of this proposal is currently under review.



## C Skills & Inclusion Programme

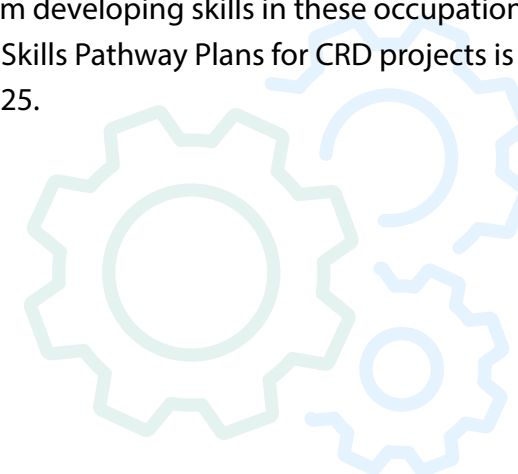
### 1. Flexible Skills

Lead Partner				
Clackmannanshire Council				
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
£1,503,000	-	-	-	£1,503,000
Headline Achievements		Next Milestone		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of the Flexible Skills Grant Fund in November 2024</li> <li>Skills Pathway Plans completed March 2025</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project development activity across CRD projects and regional stakeholders</li> </ul>		

**The Flexible Skills Project facilitates the inclusive growth ambitions of the City Region Deal partners' commitment to providing skills and employment opportunities across the significant CRD project investment in Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The City Region Deal will drive outcomes for local people through the ongoing and future investment activities of CRD projects, working in tandem with the employment and skills sector partners to realise these ambitions for local people.**

The Flexible Skills Project works with CRD projects to develop skills and employment opportunities focussing on individual and groups facing barriers to the labour market. CRD projects

will be supported to identify these opportunities through the development of a series of Skills Pathway Plans that will identify the key occupations that will become available from their work-force planning activities and identify the individuals and groups that might benefit from developing skills in these occupational areas. The completed Skills Pathway Plans for CRD projects is targeted for March 2025.



The Flexible Skills Project established a Flexible Skills Grant Fund available to CRD projects in November 2024. The fund provides a platform for CRD projects to achieve their skills and employment ambitions through investment in a range of skills and employment activities, including:

- Employment recruitment incentives
- Modern Apprenticeship support
- Skills programme development and delivery
- Job placement programmes
- Business start-up programmes
- Volunteering development
- Removal of barriers to participation
- Digital inclusion

CRD projects are encouraged to develop a range of opportunities through their project investment and ongoing activities that will be available to eligible individuals and groups seeking a pathway to improved skills and employment opportunities. Projects will also be able to work in partnership with other sector stakeholders in the delivery of these inclusive growth outcomes.



With the establishment of the Flexible Skills Grant Fund in late 2024, continuing discussions are underway across CRD projects and other stakeholders on the development of skills and employment programmes that can support local people to take up the opportunities available through the significant City Region Deal investment in the region.



## 2. Inclusion Workers and Investment Fund

Lead Partner		Stirling Council			Clackmannanshire Council
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds	
£397,000	-	-	£313,000	£710,000	

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>90 adults receiving support, exceeding our target of offering services to 70 adults.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continue to deliver services to clients.</li></ul>

This year, our team of 'Inclusion Workers' continued to identify and support people most distant from the labour market, who are not yet ready to engage with mainstream employability provisions. The project is fully implemented with a team of four Inclusion Workers supporting people across Stirling and Clackmannanshire. 90 people have received support in 24/25, against a target of 70. The two case studies below, aim to demonstrate the impact this work can have.



## Case study 1

**Logan (19) who lives in the kinship care of his grandparents. Logan suffered from adverse childhood experiences including trauma loss and neglect. Logan has been diagnosed with ADHD and shows symptoms of him being on the autism spectrum. Logan spent all his time in his room playing video games. Logan had poor self-care skills and did not look after his living space.**

When I met Logan we agreed to meet once a week in his back garden this would provide an opportunity for Logan to get out his room while developing a sense of routine. This also provided a safe space for Logan to talk through his emotional difficulties. I would use my communication and interpersonal skills to demonstrate to Logan I was interested in him and his development. Logan identified his goals as improved health and well-being and an increase in confidence and self-esteem. Logan also talked about his dream of becoming an actor.

Being compassionate and consistent with my support helped to develop a healthy working relationship as I got to know Logan better. We were able to have conversations around Logan's self-care and looking after his living space. Through

our regular meetings I would be a positive role model to Logan and encouraged him to take better care of himself and his living space. Logan took this on board and started showering more often and keeping his bedroom tidy. I would praise Logan for his efforts while encouraging him to keep moving forward. This helped Logan gain a sense of achievement and he felt better about himself and his health and well-being improved.

Logan was supported to complete a college application to study drama at Dunfermline College. Logan attended an interview at the college and recently he was given an unconditional offer. Logan has accepted this offer and his course starts in August. Moving forward Logan's goal is to get fitter as he prepares to start college and we have recently started going out for walks together.

When I asked Logan how he feels? Logan said "I feel proud of myself".

Logan's journey serves as a reminder of the importance of compassionate consistent support when working with young people who have experienced trauma, loss and neglect.

## Case study 2

**Joan (57) had experienced a lifetime of abuse, trauma and self-neglect. These experiences caused Joan to have depression with low self-esteem. Joan had been living with her daughter for around 3 years which was also having a negative impact on Joan's health and well-being.**

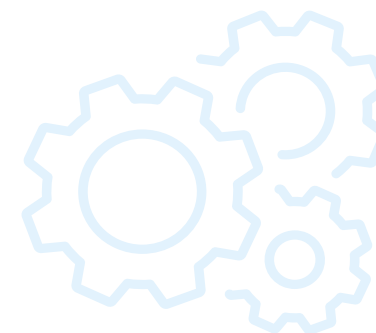
When I first met Joan we agreed to meet weekly and Joan identified her goals of improving her health and well-being while increasing her self-esteem and confidence. Joan also wanted to gain her own tenancy and one day get back into work.

Our weekly meeting involved walking to a local café and it was during this walk that Joan would talk about her unresolved issues. My approach was person centred and I supported Joan both emotionally and practically. I would empathise with Joan while summarising and paraphrasing to ensure Joan knew she was being heard. I would also encourage Joan by reminding her of what she has overcome, and I would instil hope for Joan by using motivational interviewing for Joan to identify what a better future would look like. I accessed a bike for Joan and this seemed to be a big help for Joan as it got her out the house more.

All this helped to build a healthy working relationship where Joan felt trusted and respected. Joan was also referred to a digital inclusion programme and she was a member of an art and social group, all contributing to Joan improving her well-being. I encouraged Joan to attend a 4-week bike maintenance course which again increased her confidence and self-esteem. I supported and advocated for Joan with her housing situation and she now lives in her own tenancy. Joan has also gained a part time job.

When I spoke to Joan recently, she relayed how much better her life is at the moment and how she is looking forward to the future. Joan added "if it wasn't for the inclusion project, I would probably be in my bed depressed".

Joan's journey highlights the importance of a person-centred approach to develop a healthy working relationship built on mutual trust and respect.





### 3. Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Programme

Lead Partner		Clackmannanshire Council		
Scottish Government	UK Government (DWP)	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
-	£100,000	-	-	£100,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approval of project outline in October 2024</li><li>• Work underway on the development of the Business Justification Case ongoing from December 2024</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Draft BJC for comment/approvals process.</li><li>• Funding reprofile pending approved BJC, targeting a mid-2025 start date</li></ul>







The Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Project aims to build on the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan strengthening Clackmannanshire's inclusion activities. The project will provide employability support to lone parents in Alloa South and East and provide a pathway to the local labour market with the goal of improving income levels for this targeted group.

An outline proposal for the development of an employment placement and skills development programme for the targeted lone parent group was approved to progress to CRD Business Justification Case (BJC) in October 2024. Since approval, work has been undertaken on the development of the BJC through consultations with key sector stakeholders and target participants. The initial proposal is now being built upon to develop a more robust project methodology and a detailed understanding on project delivery components. It is anticipated that the Lone Parent Draft BJC will be completed in the first quarter of 2025/26 and will then move through the finalisation process, targeting a mid-2025 start date.



## D Infrastructure

### 1. Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside

Lead Partner		Stirling Council			
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds	
-	£5,000,000		£16,100,000	£21,100,000	

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer of phase 1 land (March 2024)</li> <li>Transfer of phase 2 land (March 2025)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of Levelling Up Fund Project (March 2026)</li> </ul>

The development of the Forthside Ministry of Defence site will unlock a significant mixed-use development opportunity, the scale of which has not yet been realised in Stirling for a generation. The site, at just over 36 acres, is the largest brown-field site close to the city centre area. This presents a unique opportunity for Stirling to deliver a sustainable development which combines carbon neutral city centre living with dynamic business and leisure space. The positioning of the site will provide a catalyst for wider placemaking opportunities and transform a key district of the city.

The site - strategically located between two of the main corridors into the city - has good access links. However, given recent use as a base by the Ministry of Defence, the value it adds to the city is currently extremely restricted. Proximity to Stirling's district heating system and Stirling rail and bus stations will make this one of Stirling's most sustainable developments.

This year, negotiations continued between Stirling Council, MOD Estates and the UK Government on the arrangements for the decommissioning and transfer of the land. The first phase of the land transfer was completed in March 2024, with the final land transferred in March 2025.

The Stirling Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid focused on the redevelopment of Forthside, building on the momentum gained through the City Region Deal. Stirling Council successfully secured £19 million of LUF funding, with £16 million allocated to the redevelopment of the MOD site. The remaining £3 million will enable active travel improvements to connect the site to the city centre and beyond. The redevelopment of Forthside will unlock significant economic development opportunities and create new employment for the region. The project will regenerate and transform the MOD site from a closed industrial site to a prime investment location.

This project has moved at pace this year with the Site Investigation and demolition completed on the phase 1 site. The first road is under construction and the buildings and site services have been designed to stage 4. The project is due to be completed by March 2026 in line with Levelling Up Fund timescales.



## E Culture, Heritage & Tourism

### 1. Developing Culture, Heritage and Tourism Assets

Lead Partner		Stirling Council		Clackmannanshire Council	
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners		Other Partners	Total funds
£15,000,000	-	£1,000,000		-	£16,000,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project proposal received Joint Committee approval October 2024 to proceed to Business case development with prioritised projects.</li> <li>OBC development underway for Alloa Heritage and Enterprise Centre with £5.5m of CRD Culture Heritage &amp; Tourism investment</li> <li>Business Justification Case development underway for the City Park and Interpretation/Wayfinding projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OBC submission for endorsement</li> </ul>

**This year, work has focused on progressing the projects to progress through this programme. The Joint Committee met on the 31st of October 2024 and agreed the funding split and projects to be progressed to Business Case. These are: City Park, Albert Halls, Bannockburn House, The Smith Art Gallery and Museum, the Wayfinding/Interpretation Trail project and Alloa Heritage and Enterprise Centre.**

An initial project outline was developed for the Alloa Heritage and Enterprise Centre and submitted to the CHT Programme Board in June 2024. The proposal focuses on utilising the B listed historic Greenfield House in the centre of Alloa as both a unique

visitor destination experience and a sustainable platform for business and enterprise.

It is planned to utilise Clackmannanshire Council's Museum collection that is currently in storage, to showcase the stories of innovation throughout history and tie those to the presentation of current day innovations that will be developed going forward through Scotland's International Environment Centre and the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub. The enterprise facility will underpin this making research and innovation more accessible to new businesses.



Joint Committee approved the project proposal in October 2024 to proceed to OBC development with £5.5m of CRD Culture Heritage & Tourism investment. Clackmannanshire Council have also committed £1m capital funding towards an initial repairs contract to make Greenfield House wind and watertight. A Contractor has been appointed April 2025 to conduct these works which will continue during 2025 & 2026. Further external funding is being sought to support the CHT project capital costs.

Project teams are in place for each project and these are being progressed through the Business Case process. Business Justification Cases for the City Park, Wayfinding and Bannockburn House projects are in development and due to be presented to Joint Committee in the summer.

The Albert Halls and Smith Art Gallery and Museum projects require funding to be leveraged into the project. Strategic Outline Cases and funding plans are being established to meet this requirement.





## 2. Japanese Gardens

Lead Partner		Clackmannanshire Council		
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
-	£750,000	-	£1,148,000	£1,898,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration works complete March 2023</li> <li>Education &amp; Outreach programme extended</li> <li>LEADER funding award for New Education &amp; Outreach building, completed July 2024</li> <li>32 jobs created</li> <li>49,628 visitors per annum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal to create new tearoom and shop pavilion to replace temporary portacabin accommodation, funding dependent. Working towards Planning application submission in 2025.</li> </ul>

The Japanese Garden at Cowden was commissioned by the explorer Ella Christie in 1908 after an inspiring visit to Kyoto. The garden was created by Taki Handa, the only woman credited with the design of a garden of its type. The Japanese Garden was destroyed by vandals in 1963 and it was almost lost forever, until a careful restoration project by a charitable trust began in 2014. Due to overwhelming interest the garden opened to visitors while restoration work was in progress.

City Region Deal investment has been used to help develop the infrastructure and permanent facilities required for the

continued operation of this unique new tourism offering for Clackmannanshire. The project scope of works comprised the full restoration of the Japanese Garden, including permanent features such as the Tea House, gardens, pathways and enabling infrastructure. All works were completed by March 2023.

Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER funding was awarded to create a new Education and Outreach Building which was completed in July 2024. This provides a base for the Gardening Team, Volunteers and an education space from where workshops are delivered. The programme of education sessions includes





regular volunteering sessions, school group activities and working with specialist groups including

those who particularly benefit from the Garden experience and find it hard to access it by other means. Outreach also remains a key education activity building on the Wishes for Wellbeing project delivered in 23/24.

Also, in 2024 a UKSPF Communities + Place Grant provided for works to the car park, disabled parking, coach provision and a bike rack for cyclists.

Future capital projects are also now being planned, including a proposal to create a new tearoom and shop pavilion to replace the existing temporary portacabin accommodation. This is funding dependant. Working towards planning application to be submitted in 2025.

As part of the CRD monitoring and evaluation process, the Japanese Garden continues to report on the objectives stated within the business justification case and going forward the wider impact on the region will be assessed. The gardens are reporting a continuous rise in visitor numbers in excess of

49,000 per annum, with the majority travelling from outside the region. Employment and volunteering opportunities created so far have also exceeded target figures.



## G Digital

### Stirling Digital Hub

Lead Partner				
Stirling Council				
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
£2,000,000	-	-	-	£2,000,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business case approved at March Joint committee 2025.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commencement of works</li> </ul>

**The Digital District is intended to be a programme of investment and skills to transform and benefit urban, rural and disadvantaged areas of the region. The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region aims to be recognised as one of the UK's leading areas for digital technology and as a centre of excellence for digital skills and education across several sectors.**

The Stirling Digital Hub is a £2 million investment to deliver Phase 2 of the Digital District in Stirling, building upon recent successes and enabling future business growth. Work this year has focused on the development of the Business Justification Case which has been submitted to Government.

Through the optioneering process, a preferred way forward emerged as a building refurbishment at Forthside. The building will be refurbished to provide modern, flexible working spaces for digital business to grow and stay in Stirling.

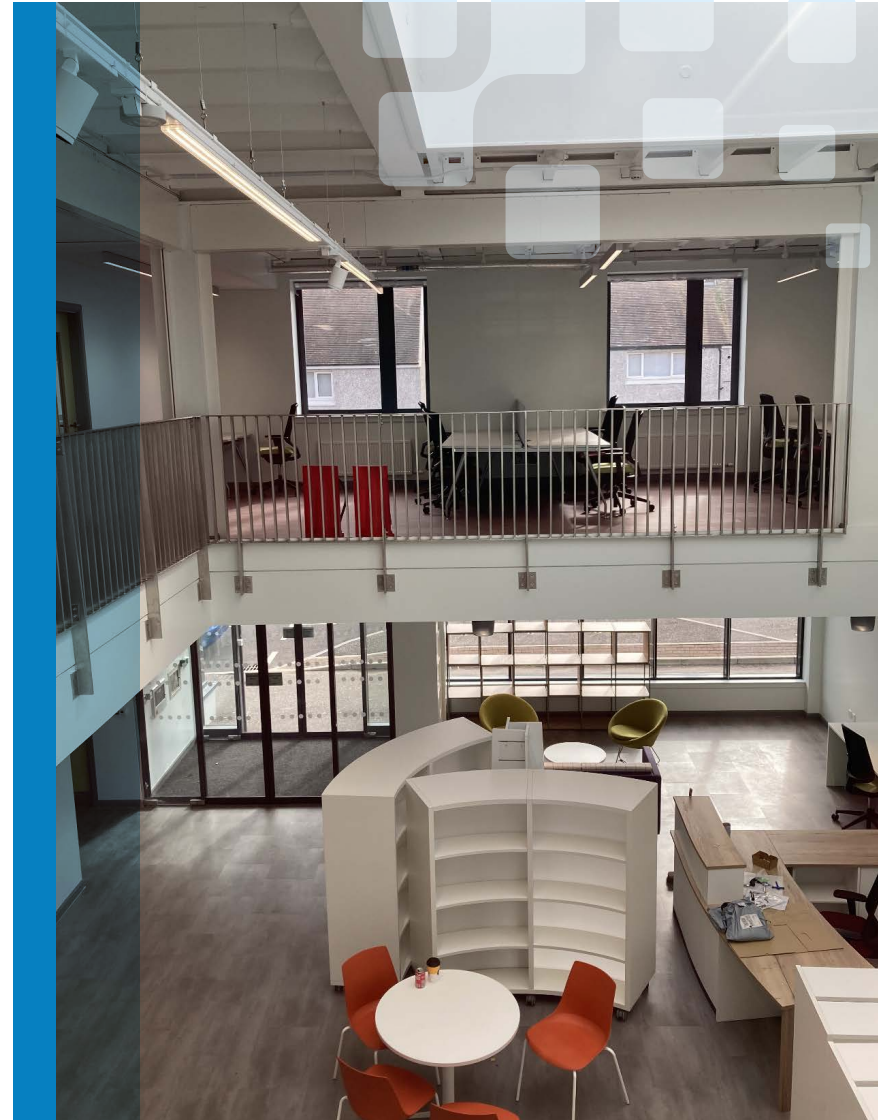
The Business Case was approved by Joint Committee in March 2025. Works will commence at pace and are due to be completed by the end of 2025.



## Digital Regional Hubs

The roll out of Digital Regional Hubs in our rural areas will also be supported by the City Region Deal. A trio of digital hubs will be located across the region in Cowie, Callander and Clackmannanshire. A total of £550,00 of CRD money was invested in the Cowie Digital Hub, while £790,000 is allocated to Callander and £660,000 to Clackmannanshire.

This will build on the city region's recent successes and enable future business growth. The investment will provide high quality business space which will allow growing companies in the region to stay local and create new and exciting opportunities across the area.



## Cowie Digital Hub

Lead Partner		Stirling Council			
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds	
£550,000	-	£241,000	£1,352,000	£2,143,000	

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Project Complete</li></ul>	

The Cowie Digital Hub provides modern business accommodation and a new library creating much needed space for community services, business and entrepreneurial activities as well as employability and skills support.

The Hub has provided a home for business support outreach services, such as Business Gateway Stirling (delivered by STEP) and CodeBase amongst other providers to one of Stirling Council's priority areas.



## Callander Digital Hub

Lead Partner		Stirling Council			
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds	
£790,000	-	-	-	£790,000	

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of demand and feasibility work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Case to be submitted to Government for endorsement</li> </ul>

Work this year has focused on reviewing the demand and feasibility of a Callander Digital Hub project. The business demand analysis work was concluded with results showing demand for the facility. Several options were therefore explored for the location of the Hub. This has resulted in a preferred way forward and architectural designs and costings are underway to inform the Business Justification Case. This is due to be submitted to Government early 25/26.



## Clackmannanshire Digital Hub

Lead Partner		Clackmannanshire Council		
Scottish Government	UK Government	Regional Partners	Other Partners	Total funds
£660,000	-	-	-	£660,000

Headline Achievements	Next Milestone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial draft OBC prepared in 2023. Development of that proposal was paused as it was agreed in March 2024 to bring together this project within the Alloa Innovation Campus programme</li> <li>Spend profile for the Clackmannanshire Digital Hub was reprofiled to 2028/29.</li> <li>Work has recommenced early 2025 to outline the project working with key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BJC development to progress</li> </ul>

**The digital district is a programme of investment and skills to transform and benefit urban, rural and disadvantaged areas of the region. Within ten years, the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region aims to be recognised as one of the UK's leading areas for digital technology and as a centre of excellence for digital skills.**

The £4M CRD investment in the Stirling Hubs, Cowie, Callander and Alloa regional hubs will provide high quality business space,

allowing growing companies in the region to stay local and create new and exciting opportunities across the area.

The Alloa Regional Digital Hub will be supported by a programme of skills development and training, involving businesses, schools, Forth Valley College, University of Stirling and local partners. The Alloa hub will help improve collaboration between digital projects in Alloa as it establishes itself as an international centre for environmental data.



# 9 Looking Back

The financial year 2024/2025 marks the mid-point of the Deal. A pivotal year in the transition into the final five years of our Deal. In April 2025 our Walk Cycle Live Stirling project completed, marking a significant milestone in our Deal and another one of our projects completed. This forms a key part of the ground-breaking and highly anticipated active travel network that will transform how people get around Stirling and the wider region.

The National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub has reached an important milestone in its construction, with the build progressing towards the fit out of specialised equipment that will enable the facility to deliver its distinct contribution to the global aquaculture industry. In parallel, there have been significant advancements in the work of Scotland's International Environment Centre, including sensor deployment for Forth ERA nearing completion. This year also saw the first phase of the transfer of the MOD land at Forthside, Stirling, decontamination of the site being a critical part of this.

March 2025 saw the approval of Stirling Digital Hub BJC. This is an essential step in progressing towards the beginning of works, with construction planned for Autumn 2025. Our Japanese Gardens, continue to deliver benefits for the Forth Valley community and has exceeded the number of visitors to the garden with 49,628 visitors this year, exceeding our annual visitor target figure of 25,000.



# 10 The Year Ahead

**The success of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal to date is rooted firmly in our shared mission and a spirit of collaboration to support the people, businesses and communities that we serve. Looking ahead to the next 12 months and the remainder of the Deal, it is this common purpose that will ensure continued success and lay the foundations for a meaningful legacy across the region.**

Future milestones will see the completion and commissioning of the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub, alongside the further development of Scotland's International Environment Centre. Together, these projects will further cement the region's research and innovation offering, and its reputation as for a dynamic and productive knowledge economy.

This will be strengthened by the delivery of the Stirling Digital Hub, which is expected to enter the construction phase following approval of its business case. Forthcoming approvals should also enable the further rollout of the Active Travel programme, including routes connecting Dunblane to Causewayhead, and the University of Stirling to Fishcross.

Work continues, developing the remaining suite of interlinked projects that - combined progress to date - will unlock the full economic potential of Stirling and Clackmannanshire.



Theme	Programme/Project	Next Milestone
<b>Transport, Connectivity &amp; Low Carbon</b>	<b>Active Travel Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of Stirling project BJC at Joint Committee – Summer 2025</li> <li>• Fishcross to University of Stirling Business Justification Case to Joint Committee Summer 2025. Detailed design, land acquisition and consultation processes to be completed.</li> </ul>
	<b>Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling</b>	April 2025 (complete)
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning autumn 2025</li> <li>• Facility fully operational winter 2025.</li> </ul>
	<b>Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) Phase 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete satellite data services deployment to data centre for Forth ERA</li> <li>• Complete deployment of sensors for Forth ERA</li> <li>• Commercialisation of Forth ERA</li> <li>• Benefits delivery plan.</li> </ul>
	<b>Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC Phase 2) &amp; Intergenerational Living Innovation hub (ILIH)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree the proposition</li> <li>• Options appraisal to be undertaken</li> <li>• Submission of a Formal Change Control</li> <li>• Submit Outline Business Case.</li> </ul>
	<b>Innovation Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change Control to be submitted to Government Summer 2025.</li> </ul>

Theme	Programme/Project	Next Milestone
<b>Skills and Inclusion</b>	<b>Flexible Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project development activity across CRD projects and regional stakeholders</li> <li>• Flexible Skills Grant Fund take up over the period.</li> <li>• Completion and distribution of Skills Pathway Plans</li> </ul>
	<b>Inclusion Workers and Investment Fund</b>	Benefits realisation
	<b>Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lone Parent Business Justification Case to Joint Committee June 2025 with project delivery to follow over 2025 and 2026.</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside</b>	Completion of phase 2 land transfer
<b>Culture, Heritage and Tourism</b>	<b>Developing Culture, Heritage and Tourism Assets Programme</b>	OBC development of Alloa Heritage & Enterprise Centre, working to Joint Committee approval March 2026.
	<b>Japanese Gardens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital work complete March 2023.</li> <li>Education &amp; Outreach programme extended, LEADER funding award for New Education &amp; Outreach building, completed July 2024.</li> <li>• Proposal to create new visitor pavilion to replace temporary portacabin accommodation, funding dependant. Planning application to be submitted in 2025.</li> </ul>



Theme	Programme/Project	Next Milestone
<b>Digital</b>	<b>Stirling Digital Hub</b>	Business Justification case approved March 2025.
	<b>Regional Digital Hub – Cowie</b>	Project complete
	<b>Regional Digital Hub – Callander</b>	Submission of Business Justification Case to Government
	<b>Regional Digital Hub – Clackmannanshire</b>	BJC development working to Joint Committee approval March 2026.



## Glossary

<b>ATR</b>	Active Travel Routes
<b>BJC</b>	Business Justification Case
<b>CC</b>	Clackmannanshire Council
<b>CHT</b>	Culture, Heritage and Tourism
<b>COG</b>	Chief Officers Group
<b>CRD</b>	City Region Deal
<b>CWB</b>	Community Wealth Building
<b>COVID</b>	Coronavirus
<b>FBC</b>	Full Business Case
<b>OBC</b>	Outline Business Case
<b>ILIH</b>	Intergenerational Living and Innovation Hub
<b>NATIH</b>	National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub
<b>RDH</b>	Regional Digital Hub
<b>REAG</b>	Regional Economic Advisory Group

<b>REF</b>	Regional Enterprise Forum
<b>RES</b>	Regional Economic Strategy
<b>RPMO</b>	Regional Programme Management Office
<b>SC</b>	Stirling Council
<b>SDS</b>	Skills Development Scotland
<b>SIEC</b>	Scotland's International Environment Centre
<b>SE</b>	Scottish Enterprise
<b>SG</b>	Scottish Government
<b>STAG</b>	Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide
<b>UKG</b>	UK Government
<b>UoS</b>	University of Stirling

<b>Regional Partners</b>	3 Primary Deal Bodies
<b>Other Partners</b>	Other Public Sector and Third Sector Bodies
<b>Commercial Partners</b>	Private Sector Bodies



Stirling &  
Clackmannanshire  
City Region Deal

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