



## Centres of progress

Improving the town centres around the Falkirk area is critical to wider regeneration and the great news is that they're really becoming centres of progress.

In **Bo'ness** a fantastic harbour project is taking place, while in **Denny** the developer **Henry Boot** has been appointed to take forward a £11 million improvement project and plans for a new supermarket, shops and library in **Stenhousemuir** have been submitted to Falkirk Council by developers Macdonald Estates. The plans include a 40,000 sq.ft. supermarket for ASDA and town centre parking.

The Council recently launched a **£5million Townscape Heritage Initiative in Bo'ness** to secure the town's future as a major tourism centre. Bo'ness has a wealth of historic buildings and has been awarded Outstanding Conservation Area Status. The new project will repair heritage buildings and bring underused property back into use. Meanwhile, a range of environmental improvements are nearing completion including heritage paving, benches and period lighting.

One architectural jewel being revitalised is **The Hippodrome**. An A listed building designed by Bo'ness architect Matt Steele, it

opened in 1911 and may have been one of Scotland's first ever purpose-built cinemas. Today's refurbishment will see it reopen as a cinema in the evening, and become a heritage centre during the day.

**ASDA's** move to **Stenhousemuir** has been welcomed warmly by Dan Macdonald, Chief Executive of Macdonald Estates. Dan said: "Our proposals will see the town centre radically remodelled, creating a modern, vibrant and welcoming environment and **ASDA** will play a critical role in breathing new life into Stenhousemuir town centre."

"Renewing and revitalising our town centres is vital to our plans to transform the area and its economy through the My Future's in Falkirk regeneration initiative", said Councillor David Bryson, Convener of Economic Development.

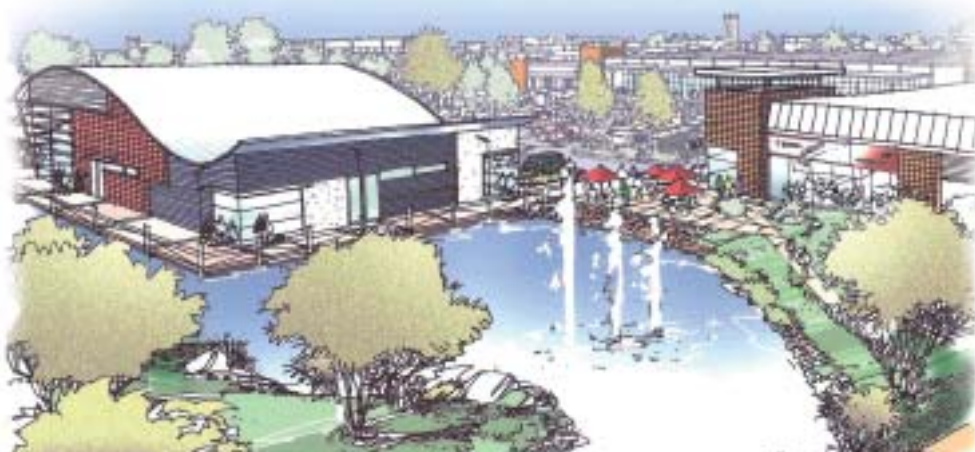
"Our area is growing, we are attracting new people and new investment, and Denny, Bo'ness and Stenhousemuir all have a big role to play in what can be a vibrant future for our area." ■

**My Future's in Falkirk** is the ambitious £23 million plan to transform the Falkirk area into a thriving, diverse and modern economy, helping local businesses to grow, attracting both companies and visitors into the area and creating and maintaining jobs for local people.

Evolved from the Falkirk Action Plan, *My Future's in Falkirk* is led by Falkirk Council, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley and BP with financial support from the European Regional Development Fund. The ten year objectives of the plan include:

- to create up to 4250 new jobs;
- to stimulate up to £200 million of additional investment;
- to grow local companies;
- to relocate a diverse range of new businesses to the area;
- to generate up to £50 million a year for the Falkirk economy.

The pioneering plan focuses on a number of projects which fall into four key themes; **Experience Falkirk** (living, working and visiting Falkirk), **Innovation Falkirk** (exploiting and developing new technologies), **Successful Falkirk** (creating capacity for business growth) and **Networked Falkirk** (exploiting physical and digital connections to the world).



Above: Stenhousemuir Library.





## Forth Valley's Excellence in Enterprise Honoured at Annual Business Awards

Seven of Forth Valley's top companies were honoured on Friday 24 March at a special awards ceremony held to celebrate the winners of the **Forth Valley Business Awards 2006**.

The Awards highlighted various successes which Forth Valley businesses have achieved over the past 12 months. The seven companies who came top from a total of fifteen shortlisted entries from across the region were:

- **Best Performing Business** (over 25 employees) award recognises dynamism and commitment to growth and success in achieving planned objectives. The winner of this award had to demonstrate key characteristics such as a clearly defined vision for achieving growth and strong leadership.  
**2006 Winner:** Graham's Dairies Ltd (Bridge of Allan)
- **Best Performing Business** (under 25 employees) award is for successful smaller businesses who were able to demonstrate a clearly defined vision for developing and growing the business in terms of both turnover and employment.  
**2006 Winner:** The Benriach Distillery Co. Ltd (Larbert)
- **Innovation & Creativity** award is for businesses that have successfully developed innovative products, services



Above: The winners of the Forth Valley Business Awards 2006 with host Kay Adams.

or creative ways of doing business with customers. The winner has to show a high degree of creativity as well as exploring ways to exploit innovation to its fullest potential.

**2006 Winner: Inovas Ltd (Larbert)**

- **Most Entrepreneurial Young Company** award is to recognise businesses under three years old that show a high degree of entrepreneurship and vision for the future, with the potential for further growth and expansion in turnover, profits and employment levels.

**2006 Winner:** Lawscript (Scotland) Ltd (Alloa)

- **Business in the Community** award is to recognise companies that have demonstrated a commitment to the community in which they operate. It commends company corporate responsibility and community contribution which can take the form of reinvestment, support, maintenance, or development of a project or initiative which benefits the local community and business environment.

**2006 Winner:** Fizez Ltd (Stirling)

- **International Business** award highlights organisations that are not only successful in exporting but are committed to continue growing their international business. The winning entrant had to show expertise in planning

and managing an export strategy including managing currency fluctuations, credit control and marketing overseas.

**2006 Winner: Vibtech (Larbert)**

- **Excellence in Skills and Learning** award is to recognise businesses that demonstrate commitment to the learning and development of their workforces, and where appropriate, the supply chain. The successful companies had to have a strategic commitment to learning throughout the organisation, recognising the importance of the continual development of staff skills.

**2006 Winner:** MCA Group (Scotland) Ltd (Alloa)

Stephen Bremner, director, commercial banking, The Royal Bank of Scotland, commented: "I would like to congratulate each of the category winners for their outstanding achievement. Each have demonstrated business excellence and are worthy winners of their respective categories. I hope that the other finalists will return next year with the aim of going that little bit further."

Category sponsors included University of Stirling and Forth Valley College, Syngenta, Forth Ports PLC, Kemfine, Ineos and Stirling University Innovation Park. Both Falkirk and Stirling Council supported the event and the Falkirk Herald and Central FM were media sponsors.

YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY 2005

64%

believe that the Falkirk area is changing and getting better.

# MY FUTURE'S IN falkirk project updates



## Young people speak up!

- Good opportunities for employment and training, good schools and a wide range of leisure and sporting activities came out tops when young people were asked what they thought about the local area.

These statements and many more form the key findings of a survey carried out late last year as part of the area's economic development initiative, My Future's in Falkirk.

Partners involved in the initiative wanted to know what young people feel about the area. The information will now be used to develop ways to work with young people on plans and projects and make sure that appropriate services are in place to meet the needs and aspirations of young people in the area.

Councillor David Bryson, Convener of the Economic Development Committee said: *'The message is loud and clear. Although the majority of young people have very positive experiences of living in the local area, there are some aspects highlighted in the survey which require more work. Thanks to the survey we now have a pretty full and honest picture of what it's like to be a young person living in the Falkirk area.'*

The survey findings can be found on [www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk](http://www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk)

## Next step for Stadium

- The next step in developing Falkirk Community Stadium is now one step closer.

The Stadium's board of directors has recommended that shareholders approve plans to appoint **Terrace Hill North East Ltd** as developers for the next stage of construction.

If everything moves according to plan it will be all systems go for the latest stage in Falkirk's iconic landmark.

Visit [www.falkirkstadium.co.uk](http://www.falkirkstadium.co.uk) for more info.

## Programme provides benefits

- Taking part in the Falkirk Business Panel events programme allows local companies to benefit from and contribute to all the developments that are happening in the area.

The programme is well under way, and its range of workshops and seminars also give business people the chance to get the latest news on regeneration, and share their experiences.

For more information on current activities go to page 6 or visit [www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk/businesspanel](http://www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk/businesspanel)



## Online and on the button for business

- Falkirk Online is a new website offering a one stop shop for information and services in the Falkirk area, and it has a section especially dedicated to local businesses.

There's information on a host of business topics and services, as well as links to agencies which can give your more help.

Anyone starting a new business, managing an existing business or looking for a new location can find out what's available for companies in the area.

Businesses in the Falkirk area can advertise FREE. All you have to do is visit [www.falkirkonline.net](http://www.falkirkonline.net) and register your details by completing the on-line submission form.

You can also submit seminars, workshops or other events for inclusion in the event listings.

Falkirk Online already contains hundreds of pages of local information, help and advice but there's lots of room for more. If you have any suggestions about what could be included, and what would be beneficial for businesses in the area contact us now through the website, or email [info@falkirkonline.net](mailto:info@falkirkonline.net).

## School Fair with a difference

- Over 2,000 Primary 7 children from 52 Falkirk schools recently took part in the annual INEOS Science, Engineering and Technology Fair.

Part of the My Future's in Falkirk Schools into Technology project, the event ran from 6 - 21 March in the indoor arena at Grangemouth Stadium.

The workshops involved covered a wide range of topics including engineering, physics and chemistry.

Helen Fleming, INEOS' seconded teacher at Grangemouth said: *'As an industry that uses science and technology everyday it's important that we enthuse the next generation to take up these subjects at secondary school. This event is all about showing children that science and technology can be fun!'*



For more information visit [www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk](http://www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk)



# Company and Sector NEWS



## Whisky giant invests £32m in Grangemouth Operation

Whisky giant **Whyte & Mackay** is just months away from opening its multi-million pound bottling facility in Grangemouth.

The £32 million project will see the bottling figures rocket from one million cases of premium whisky to seven million with an overall capacity for twelve million.

It will also mean the Grangemouth facility will be able to deal with the full range of Whyte & MacKay products including vodka, gin, and rum, rather than just its premium lines.

Previously, the company's Leith bottling plant handled 6.5 million cases a year, but due to concerns about long-term accessibility, transport infrastructure and an increasingly competitive international market, it decided to sell the site and consolidate operations.

Grangemouth was chosen thanks to its central location, excellent transport links and the long-term viability of the site.

■ FALKIRK HERALD, 2 FEBRUARY 2006

## Residential Redevelopment for Former Bo'ness Depot

A Southern-based packaging company has sold the former depot at Bridgeness Road in Bo'ness (Ryden acting) to **David Wilson Homes**. The house builder has obtained planning consent to redevelop the 5.2 acre site with 75 houses.

Bo'ness is situated on the south side of the River Forth at the western end of the Firth of Forth and has good access to Falkirk, Edinburgh, Grangemouth and Stirling.

■ WWW.SCOTTISHPROPERTY.CO.UK, 21 FEBRUARY 2006

## Debenhams has the Desire

Bosses at The Mall Howgate (Falkirk) have announced that a **Desire by Debenhams** store is to open its doors in October.

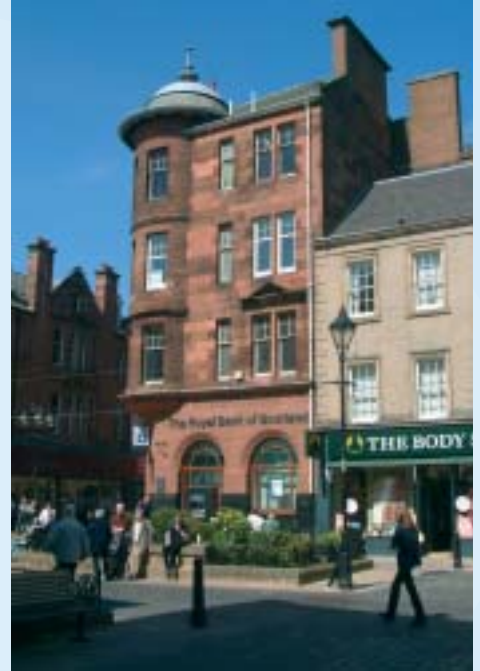
A first of its kind in Scotland, the 13,500 sq ft store will be housed in the former Market at the Mall. The store will create 43 jobs, 15 of them full-time.

Howgate general manager David Pierotti said: "It will make the shopping experience at The Mall Howgate even better and we're sure shoppers will love the bright new store along with the great new ranges available to them."

■ FALKIRK HERALD, 2 FEBRUARY 2006

## Funding package will help six pilot projects

A £500,000 funding package will help six pilot projects set up **business improvement districts** (BID) in towns and cities across Scotland. The money from the Scottish Executive will help develop schemes in business



parks in Alloa, Tillicoultry and Alva, Bathgate, Edinburgh, **Falkirk**, Glasgow and Inverness. Each pilot area will be given up to £50,000, with the prospect of further funds as they move forward. A BID will only go ahead if more than half of businesses vote in favour of the plans.

■ PLANNING, 24 MARCH 2006

## The Mod's coming to Town!

Falkirk will host the **Royal National Mod** in 2008. The news guarantees the town will be firmly in the spotlight for thousands of visitors two years from now... and deliver a money-spinning bonus for hotels, restaurants and pubs across the district.

■ FALKIRK HERALD, 13 MARCH 2006

## Council Leader David Alexander claimed:

'This demonstrates Falkirk is now very much seen as a go-ahead and vibrant community that people and agencies want to come to.'

'The huge bonus is the fact that Falkirk district business will benefit from an additional £1million spend during the festival.'



YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY 2005

# 57.5%

# are proud of the Falkirk area.

continued...



### Put your money on the red engine

Close to the brink in 2004, Falkirk's **Alexander Dennis**, bus supplier to Las Vegas and London is now in rude health.

An engine is helping to save one of Scotland's last bastions of manufacturing: Alexander Dennis.

The 6.7 litre diesel engine, lighter than the 8 litre engine it replaces, is delivering 18% fuel savings in trials in London, and is the first to be compliant with Transport for London's increasingly stringent emissions rules.

The Falkirk firm already has orders from bus operators Singapore-owned Metroline, Go-Ahead subsidiary London Central and Stagecoach.

Just two years on, the company is in good enough shape to show an operating profit of £7 million on £150 million turnover. Chief executive Jim Hastie expects 10% revenue growth, and a rise in profits of over £10m, in the current year.

■ SUNDAY HERALD, 19 MARCH 2006

### Topping the League Table

The football team is riding high and so too are **Stenhousemuir's** schools and house prices.

The town, like its football team, looks to be going up in the world. Statistics show some properties have sold for as much as 40% more than the asking price in recent months. However, most homes - and this includes a fair mix of 1950s to 1980s former local authority properties - are sold for about 15% more than the offers over figure, with traditional homes typically rising to 25%. Fixed prices are rare in this former foundry town, with more buyers than properties for sale.

■ THE HERALD, HOUSE PRICE GUIDE  
28 JANUARY 2006

# Talkback

## JIM HARWOOD

Managing Director  
Christie Timber Services Ltd

Christie Timber Services Ltd  
are specialist timber machinists.



### *Favourite place?*

St Andrews

### *Favourite eaterie?*

As a lifelong carnivore it has to be  
"The Champany" at Linlithgow

### *Best piece of business advice*

My advice would be to "Make every penny a prisoner", and keep the bank manager fully informed about both the failures and the successes of your business.

### *Hobbies?*

Sociable (but not very good) golf

### *What makes your blood boil?*

People who moan about the lack of opportunity but really are hiding their lack of ambition

### *What makes you happy and contented?*

After 12 years, just to know that we have succeeded when an awful lot of critics were just waiting for us to fail, gives me a rosy glow inside.

### *In one sentence, what piece of advice could you offer to a new business?*

Have faith that you can overcome all the obstacles put in your way, with hard work and determination.

### *Careful plans or big risks?*

Business is not black and white, on the surface what appear to be big risks, can be reduced to a more manageable level by careful planning.

### *What has been the most difficult hurdle to overcome in business and how did you do it?*

I found it very difficult to convince potential funders that we had a business model that could succeed, and growing the business quickly enough to keep all the funders and interested parties on side was also very a major hurdle which we overcame eventually by utilising the services of a non executive director, who gave the business added credibility.

### *Which famous person do you most admire and why?*

Richard Branson - from an amazing start almost 40 years ago, to have gone through all the different businesses he has and still retain that dynamism and hunger to drive himself and his companies forward. Mind you, I wouldn't mind 1% of his marketing budget.

### *In a perfect world...*

My golf might actually improve!





Above: Martin Halstead chats to Falkirk Business Panel members.

**The Falkirk Business Panel** was relaunched earlier this year with an exciting programme of activities and events to help revitalise and motivate the businesses of the area. The Panel relaunch was piloted by Martin Halstead, who has set up his own airline at the tender age of 19. Martin talked about the drive, energy and focus that led him to be dubbed 'baby Branson'. The Panel is seeking to harness its own drive, energy and focus so come along and participate in the events and meet other local businesses.

# THE FALKIRK BUSINESS PANEL

Working together for the future of the Falkirk area; creating a strong local economy



**falkirkonline**

Desperately Seeking...

Get Registered Now and Get Known...

Have you registered your business yet with the new on-line directory, supported by Falkirk OnLine?

Working with Falkirk OnLine we are developing an up-to-date Business Directory for all businesses in the Falkirk area. So either go on-line or complete the questionnaire that was recently mailed out.

Benefit by registering your business at [www.falkirkonline.net](http://www.falkirkonline.net)



## LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Falkirk Business Panel now has a new Leadership Group which has met twice over the last three months. This group brings together leaders from a wide representation of businesses and support agencies in the Falkirk area. The businesses range in size from very small to large and come from all parts of the Falkirk Council area.

The group will provide leadership and direction for the Falkirk Business Panel and will encourage membership and promote business across and outwith the Falkirk area.

The Leadership Group:

**Linda MacKay**, Principal, Forth Valley College.

**George Stevenson**, Managing Director, Mathieson Bakeries Ltd.  
**John Blackie**, Site and Manufacturing Director, Kemfine UK Ltd.

**Ian Fyfe**, HR Director, Ineos Olefins.  
**Fiona Doherty**, Business Integration Manager, Ineos.

**Jim Harwood**, Managing Director, Christie Timber Services Ltd.  
**Craig Morrison**, Managing Director, Palimpsest Book Production Ltd.

**Stephen Barr**, Managing Director, The Mariner Group.

**Pamela Ringrose**, Director of Operations, MetTech.

**Jack Marshall**, Managing Director, Tapside Marketing.

**Barbara Davidson**, Director, Barbara Davidson Pottery.

**Anne Morrison**, Director, Carmor Associates.

**Ian Webster**, Club Secretary, Glenbervie Golf Club.

**Douglas Cameron**, Director, Eden Consultancy Group Ltd.

**Rob Willox**, Proprietor, WebMedia Design.

**David Bryson**, Convenor of Economic Development, Falkirk Council.

**Maureen Campbell**, Director of Community Services, Falkirk Council.

**David Moffat**, Economic Development and Tourism Manager, Falkirk Council.

**Bob Mathieson**, Manager Business Development, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley.

**Russell Parker**, Director, FEAT.

**Alistair Mitchell**, Town Centre Manager, Falkirk Town Centre Management.

YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY 2005

72%

said the environment and open spaces are important.

## Events Programme

The main purpose of the Falkirk Business Panel is to **network, connect** and **inform** the business community; creating a stronger and more vibrant business environment. Aside from networking with other businesses, the programme of events will provide businesses the opportunity to meet and be motivated by a variety of business speakers.

### Talk Business

We are grateful to partners HBOS for sponsoring two major events involving nationally renowned inspirational business speakers.

**Gio Benedetti** (Benedetti International) and **Gordon Richardson** (Beanscene) head the bill, leading masterclasses in business excellence on the themes of 'innovation and creativity' and 'leadership in building a brand' respectively.

The first of these events was held in late April, with Gio Benedetti enthralled the audience with how he has transformed a number of businesses through innovation and creativity and, in the process, made money and created employment for many.

**BOOK NOW TO HEAR GORDON RICHARDSON SPEAK ON TUESDAY 3RD OCTOBER.**

Spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

**Venue: Callendar House. Cost: £20 + VAT.**



Gordon Richardson (left) and Gio Benedetti.

A range of events are planned for June-December and include **Open for Business** (22 June) - an opportunity to see how companies do business, **Retail Sector Event** (August), **My Future's in Falkirk Initiative Update** (September), **Open for Learning** (November) - encouraging enterprise and education business links.

Full details are available on [www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk](http://www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk).

Most events are free, **BOOK NOW** by contacting Shanliza at Stark Events on **0845 60 66 826** or at [shanliza@starkeventsuk.com](mailto:shanliza@starkeventsuk.com).

 **BANK OF SCOTLAND**  
CORPORATE

## Economic Outlook

### Productivity and Innovation

A major issue for Scotland's economic performance is its ability to increase productivity levels to those in other developed economies.

Productivity is a core measure of the health and competitiveness of an economy as it measures the amount of added value per worker. While we have seen a recent increase in productivity growth in Forth Valley, it still trails Scotland and Scotland trails the rest of the UK.

Productivity growth is influenced by a wide range of factors. Perhaps the most significant is an area's industrial make up. Some sectors have significantly higher productivity levels than others reflecting the nature of the business they are in. You just have to think of the economic value of the throughput of a large refinery compared with the turnover of a retail outlet to understand the differences in output per worker.

For individual businesses productivity is an important measure as it reflects how resources are being used to maximise efficiency and sales while minimising input costs. There are many factors that influence productivity rates which all interrelate and work individually or in combination. They include the introduction of new products and services which have greater market potential, have higher value and/or cost less to produce than existing offerings, investment in capital equipment and new technologies to improve production processes and reduce costs, incentives for better workforce productivity including additional training and development for improved skills as well as progressive and ambitious management.

One factor in the productivity formula gaining considerable interest in public policy terms is business investment in research and development (R&D)

and innovation in more general. In comparison with OECD competitor nations Scotland lags significantly. In 2003 Scottish businesses invested around 0.58% of the economy's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP i.e. the total output from the economy). In comparison business R&D investment in Finland, a country of just over 5 million people, similar to Scotland, invests 2.46% of its GDP, nearly 5 times greater.

Currently much of Scotland's investment in innovation happens in larger companies and in a small range of knowledge-intensive sectors which are geographically concentrated and often led by foreign owned firms. On the positive front higher education particularly Universities perform much better in the innovation stakes than the UK as a whole, although the links between businesses and the knowledge and ideas generated in Universities is weaker.

Various public policy responses have been made to promote innovation such as the Intermediary Technology Institutes, universities have established commercialisation units and financial support schemes such as SPUR, SCIS and R&D plus have been introduced. While these are clearly part of the answer to Scotland's innovation gap, it will require businesses to think differently about innovation and how it should play a bigger part in their future.

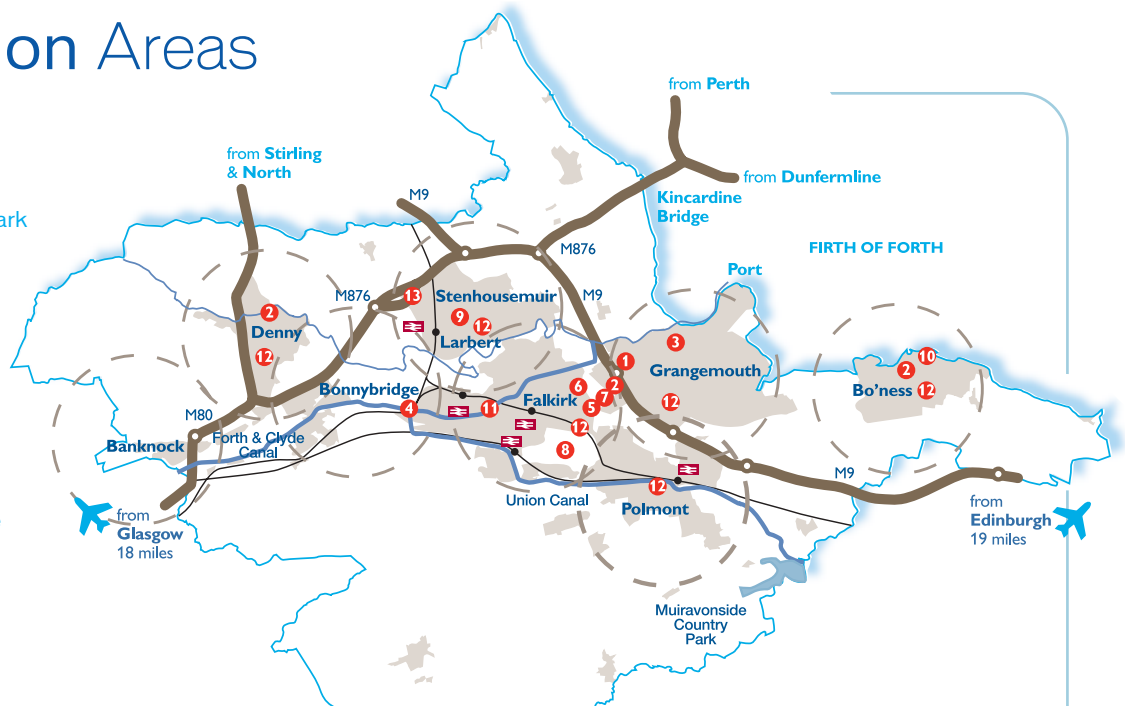
**STUART OGG**  
Acting Chief Executive  
Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley



## Current Action Areas

### KEY TO MAP

- 1 Grangemouth Technology Park
- 2 Business Incubator Activity
- 3 Distribution Activity
- 4 Falkirk Wheel
- 5 Falkirk Community Stadium
- 6 Falkirk Gateway
- 7 EcoPark
- 8 National Festival Site - Callendar Park
- 9 Stenhousemuir Town Centre Regeneration
- 10 Bo'ness Town/Foreshore Development
- 11 Canal Development
- 12 Schools into Technology
- 13 Glenbervie Business Park



## Useful Telephone Numbers

- **Business Gateway:**  
0845 609 6611 or visit [www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)
- **Falkirk Council:**  
Property Search: Jennifer Anton - 01324 59 0975  
Business Support: Stewart Cameron - 01324 59 0964  
Employment & Training - 0800 028 0363
- **Development Services** (planning, trading standards, licensing, environmental health): 01324 50 4950
- **Falkirk Business Panel:**  
David Moffat, Falkirk Council 01324 59 0963
- **Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley:** 01786 451919
- **Falkirk & District Town Centre Management Ltd:**  
01324 61 1293
- **Falkirk Enterprise and Action Trust:** 01324 66 5500
- **VisitScotland:** 01786 44 5222
- **Forth Valley College:** 01324 40 3000
- **The Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust:** 01324 48 3300
- **Careers Scotland:** 01324 62 0311
- **My Future's in Falkirk:** Shona Thom - 01324 59 0967



YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY 2005

66%

think the area is a great place to go to school.