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Annual Conference

BUSINESS IN **falkirk**

MY FUTURE'S IN FALKIRK AND BUSINESS NEWS **FEBRUARY 09**



BUSINESS PANEL AND COUNCIL COMBINE ON ACTIONS FOR ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

BUSINESSES AND COUNCIL COME TOGETHER FOR FALKIRK



George Stevenson

Linda Gow

Working together and supporting each other; this is how we can face the challenge of the economic downturn.

This was the key message at our meeting at the start of 2009, when the Council and the Leadership Group of the Falkirk Business Panel came together.

The Council had recently approved an Action Plan to boost the local economy. The Leadership Group applauded this early action and is keen to support the plan, which includes practical support for businesses, mechanisms to bring businesses together, an enhanced response from the Council and a focused campaign to seek external support, such as pressing for early government action to support the A801 River Avon Gorge Scheme.

This is a time for everyone to work together and we would encourage all businesses to engage in the programme, whether

it's through offering your help and expertise to support others or whether it's seeking help for your own business.

In addition to this the Council, Business Panel Leadership Group and other partners have been working together to prioritise actions that will make a difference to the business community over the longer term. This includes updating the My Future's in Falkirk initiative to reflect the changing needs of the Falkirk area.

We will be holding a free business event in Falkirk Town Hall on 12th March where you can come along and find out more about our programme of action. Please contact us now if you need support or can offer support, we all need to work together to face the current economic challenges.

George Stevenson
FALKIRK BUSINESS PANEL

Linda Gow
LEADER, FALKIRK COUNCIL



ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Falkirk Council has published the following **12 point action plan** to help businesses during the economic downturn:

- Promote a package of local business support, including financial advice and business to business support
- Promote local shopping and town centres to assist retailers with the 'Shop Local' campaign
- Review the responsiveness of Council's services to business
- Promote and encourage local tourism throughout the Falkirk area
- Joint lobbying with business to press for accelerated infrastructure investment (including the Avon Gorge link, a new 4-way junction and access road to Grangemouth Port from the M9, and improved junctions to motorway network at Glenbervie)
- Promote investment in housing locally
- Accelerate capital investment in business property
- Flexible approach to maintain investment in regeneration schemes
- Attract investment and maintain jobs by reviewing specific planning related issues
- Enhance access to jobs and redundancy support services
- Assist companies to access training support
- Improve access to financial advice services

The actions are designed to add value for companies to the services already provided through Business Gateway. Full details of the plan, showing timescales and intended outcomes can be found at www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk (latest news section).

JOIN FALKIRK BUSINESS PANEL

AND LEND YOUR VOICE AND SUPPORT TO CHANGING THE FALKIRK ECONOMY FOR THE BETTER.

Falkirk Business Panel promotes:

- **Opportunity**
- **Innovation**
- **Progress**

We are interested in:

- **F**ulfilling the Falkirk area's potential
- **A**dvocating positive change
- **L**ocal engagement and influencing the local economic agenda
- **K**nowing about and influencing what's going on
- **I**nnovative approaches to solving commonly shared private and public sector issues
- **R**esults for business and the wider community
- **K**nowledge transfer

JOIN TODAY!

Membership of the Falkirk Business Panel is free and is open to any business located in the Falkirk area. To join, please contact David Moffat on 01324 59 0963 or register your details at www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk/businesspanel

FORTHCOMING Events

BUSINESS UPDATE EVENT

Thursday 12 March 2009

9am - 11am, Falkirk Town Hall

This event will cover the Economic Action Plan in more detail and the review of the My Future's in Falkirk initiative.

FALKIRK BUSINESS FAIR

Friday 12 June 2009

11am - 5pm, Falkirk Town Hall.

Please note change of date from 19th to 12th June.

FALKIRK BUSINESS PANEL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday 9 September 2009

9am - 1pm, Falkirk Town Hall

Register for the above events on **0845 60 66 826** or email shanliza@starkeventsuk.com.

NETWORKING EVENTS

Various networking events will be organised to bring together either businesses from the same sector, or businesses with similar issues that would benefit from working together. Workshops for retailers will commence in February. Keep an eye on www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk for further details.

OTHER EVENTS

Scottish Enterprise has also organised a range of events in the coming months, to help businesses equip themselves in the current economic climate.

Full information is available at www.nowthetimetask.com/events.

The Falkirk Business Campaign

The Falkirk Business Panel was set up in 2002 as a key part of My Future's in Falkirk. It brings together businesses in the Falkirk area with the various public support agencies and the Forth Valley College. The Falkirk Business Panel is open to all businesses. Its aim is to get the public and private sectors working together to improve the local economy and to drive Falkirk forward.

The work of the Panel is led and coordinated by a small Leadership Group, with around 20 people representing the different business sectors and public agencies.

During last year the Leadership Group carried out work to identify the key medium term actions needed to drive forward the Falkirk economy. Presented at the first Falkirk Business Conference in November last year and endorsed by the 100 or so people attending the event, the actions will form the basis of a campaign in which businesses as well as public organisations can get involved.

The action areas are as follows:

KEY AREA	CHALLENGE	OUR ACTION
INFRASTRUCTURE Transport and Infrastructure	Improved transport connections: • Avon Gorge • Grangemouth Port • Motorway junctions	Powerful lobby of key influencers
YOUNG PEOPLE Engaging with Young People	Equipping young people with the right attitudes and skills to effectively contribute to the community	More businesses working more effectively with more young people, schools, college and parents
ENVIRONMENT Creating an environment where businesses can thrive	Single point contact for businesses	Implement new business support structure for Falkirk
LOCATION Business Property and Locations	Business property availability	Put process in place to ensure that property is available for businesses in each category

helplines

● BUSINESS SUPPORT

For business support, contact Business Gateway/Falkirk Enterprise Action Trust on **01324 665500**.

You can also get advice and guidance from www.bgateway.com and www.falkirkonline.net.

● WORRIED ABOUT DEBT?

Falkirk Council has professional debt advice officers who can provide free, confidential, impartial and independent advice and support.

Visit www.falkirk.gov.uk/debt for more information.

● HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you can help in any way to support the Economic Action Plan, please contact Alexandria on **01324 590912** or alexandria.ward@falkirk.gov.uk.

MY FUTURE'S IN FALKIRK

The long-term economic development initiative for the Falkirk area

Relationships between business and public bodies have always been strong in the Falkirk area and were enhanced in 2002 by the creation of the public-private economic development partnership "My Future's in Falkirk".

The My Future's in Falkirk initiative has not only delivered a range of activities but has engaged, aligned and mobilised the wider community, particularly businesses and young people, in setting and pursuing high economic aspirations.

Today's economic challenges have led to a review of the initiative which will update the operational plan and partnership structures. The plan will focus on those projects and activities which are best placed to deliver the continuing transformation of the Falkirk economy. The initiative will continue to be driven by key public and private sector partners who will push forward the aspirations of the area and build on the excellent joint working arrangements in the business and wider community.

There has been initial consultation on the future priorities of the initiative through the Business in Falkirk Newsletter, www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk and a project leaders' focus group. The work of the Falkirk Business Panel in identifying economic drivers is also being fed into the updated initiative.

An updated My Future's in Falkirk document will be produced for wider consultation. It is expected to be available end February / early March on www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk. Businesses, other organisations and the wider community will be asked to submit comments on the draft plan.

MY FUTURE'S IN
falkirk

What You Said at the Annual Conference



Falkirk businesses gave a huge vote of confidence in the long term future for the Falkirk area and the Falkirk business economy, with 86% believing that “the Falkirk economy will improve in the long-term” and 89% believing that “the Falkirk area is a good place to do business”.

These were key outputs from the first annual conference of the Falkirk Business Panel in November attended by over 100 people. Introduced by Council Leader, Linda Gow, the conference featured excellent presentations from George Stevenson (Mathiesons’ Bakeries) and Ian Fyfe (INEOS) regarding the work of the Panel and a fascinating and highly relevant presentation from Derek Casey regarding Glasgow’s successful bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

The conference also featured an open forum at which all present had the opportunity to vote electronically on a range of issues. Not surprisingly, nearly half those attending identified the current business environment as the key area for the Business Panel. However, there was also significant support for addressing transport and infrastructure issues, with **66%** of attendees agreeing that the “quality of transport infrastructure has an impact on my business”. There was huge support for an external lobby on the key transport issues with over **70%** actively supportive and **20%** broadly supportive.

KEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES FOR EXTERNAL LOBBYING	
Avon Gorge:	completion of M9:M8 link replacing the current crossing
Grangemouth Port:	new 4-way junction and access road to port from M9
Glenbervie:	4-way junction to motorway network

When asked “what change to business support would have the greatest impact?”, **35%** called for increased networking opportunities, **28%** for improved information provision and **23%** for easier access to support services.

You can view the results of the conference survey in full at www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk (latest news section).

