

My Future's in Falkirk Initiative Progress Report at 30th June 2008

Introduction

My Future's in Falkirk is an innovative 10 year economic development initiative, set up in December 2002, which is transforming the Falkirk area into a diverse and modern economy and a desirable place to work, live and visit. The partners in this public/private sector initiative are Falkirk Council, Scottish Enterprise, BP and Ineos.

The area already makes a major contribution to the Scottish economy through its position as the hub of the chemicals industry, its extensive transportation links and its growing reputation as a tourism and leisure destination.

It is anticipated that, by 2012, up to 4250 new jobs will have been created through the My Future's in Falkirk Initiative and an additional £50 million a year will have been generated for the local economy.

My Future's in Falkirk includes a range of projects which are being progressed to transform the economy of the area. Falkirk's economic growth is already contributing the Scottish Government's National Outcomes and Targets and the area has the potential to contribute much more. The My Future's in Falkirk Initiative will continue to help realise this potential over the next five years.

Highlights

- Largest Big Lottery Living Landmarks award of **£25 million**
- **£15 million** Stenhousemuir town centre redevelopment nearing completion
- Restoration of Hippodrome cinema in Bo'ness as part of **£5 million** Townscape Heritage Initiative
- **92%** of local businesses agree Falkirk is a good place to do business
- To date, **£750 million** of private sector investment committed to the area
- Home of Scotland's **8th most popular** visitor attraction
- Unemployment at **2.1%** is below the Scotland and UK averages (April 2008)

Progress

Since launching in December 2002, it is estimated that private developers have committed over £750 million of new investment to the Falkirk area on a wide range of My Future's in Falkirk projects.

This figure, which is far in excess of the predicted £200 million set out in the original Falkirk Action Plan, will see major economic development and regeneration activity continue across the area over the next 5 years.

Appointed developers to date are Macdonald Estates plc, ING Real Estate UK Ltd, Henry Boot plc and Miller Ltd.

Although not directly linked to the My Future's in Falkirk initiative but reflecting significant confidence in the area, other major investment/announcements made recently include:

- **New £300m hospital** to serve the population of Forth Valley in Larbert by 2009.
- **£60m investment in green fuel plant** by INEOS at its Grangemouth plant.
- **New £40m distribution hub** to be built in Grangemouth by Forth Ports.
- **BP's £60m investment** in a new treatment plant at their Grangemouth operation.

The overall investment figures do not include the recent award of £25 million from the Big Lottery's Living Landmarks programme for The HELIX project or indeed the additional partner and stakeholder funding committed to this project.

Projects

The My Future's in Falkirk Initiative continues to be a living programme in which some projects reach their conclusion and others are created as opportunities arise.

Earls Gate Park

Earls Gate Park in Grangemouth presents a unique opportunity for businesses to acquire a fully serviced, flexible and well located industrial, manufacturing, commercial site in Central Scotland. Earls Gate Park is a joint venture between KemFine and Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley. Sites from 1-30 acres are available. FASCO Engineers Supply Ltd is the first company to locate on the site.

Partners have hailed the development as a unique offering in Scotland due to on site utilities which will be available to tenants such as KemFine's state of the art effluent treatment plant and combined heat and power station with motorway, rail and sea access and has the potential to create up to 950 new jobs.

Abbotsford Business Park

The 38.5 acre former Alcan site at David's Loan in Falkirk is being transformed by Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley and Falkirk Council to provide much needed business/industrial accommodation. This joint venture has the potential to create up to 700 jobs and £50m investment.

New access roads, a roundabout and infrastructure will provide serviced plots for up to 50,000 sq. metres of new modern industrial and commercial units.

Falkirk Gateway

A £500 million development by Macdonald Estates Plc and Royal Bank of Scotland which will transform 300 acres on the northern side of Falkirk into a new leisure, retail and commercial district. When complete it will encompass 50,000 sq m of business space and a 25,000 sq m retail park as well as hotel and conference facilities.

Grangemouth Technology Park

A £1.6 million high-tech research and development facility providing cutting-edge business space for companies involved in chemical bio-science and small scale production. Surface Active Solutions Limited (SASL) recently announced an expansion of its research and development into MicroEmulsion technology.

Town Centres Regeneration

Bo'ness - ING Real Estate UK Ltd was chosen by the Council as its preferred developer for the regeneration of the Bo'ness harbour and foreshore area. The regeneration plans focus on the waterfront and historic harbour. The adjacent Scottish Railway Preservation Society attracts 60,000 visitors each year to its steam train operations and railway museum.

ING, part of the international Dutch-based ING Group, has extensive experience of waterfront regeneration projects. In June 2008, Falkirk Council approved a re-phasing of the 27.5 hectare development following a commercial review of the project by ING.

The masterplan will now commence with residential development to the eastern area of the town's foreshore and aims to complete over a 10 year period with the building of up to 750 new properties, reinstatement of the 400 year-old harbour and the creation of new infrastructure.

The adjoining town centre has Outstanding Conservation Area and Townscape Heritage Initiative status supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland. This has seen the recent completion of the critical project – restoration of Scotland's first purpose built cinema, The Hippodrome.

Grangemouth - Initial plans put forward by Falkirk Council and two other major landowners in the town centre are being progressed. They propose significant change to the town centre environment through a £22m investment package.

The initial masterplan proposals were subject to a significant public consultation exercise and Miller Ltd has been selected as the Council's preferred developer. An outline planning application is currently being

prepared which will see delivery of new Council facilities as part of the regeneration initiative.

Stenhousemuir - MacDonald Estates plc has created a 6.48 hectare town centre site which is at an advanced stage and near completion. A new community library and a new retail centre with a combination of local and national businesses including a new Asda foodstore, Royal Bank of Scotland and Clydesdale Bank taking pride of place.

The full scheme includes:

- a 40,000 sq.ft. Asda foodstore with 360 parking spaces
- more than 34,000 sq.ft of retail space in three single-storey blocks
- a new library and landscaped civic spaces
- a new access road off the B905 (King Street)
- a new football pitch and changing rooms
- improvements to Crownest Park

All works are expected to be completed by 2010.

Denny – Plans for the £13 million development by Henry Boot plc include a 24,000 sq.ft. foodstore, new library, shops, offices, a restaurant/bar, 10 residential units, improved traffic management and environmental improvements in Denny Town Centre.

Essential regeneration works involve the demolition and removal of the five-storey shop and maisonette blocks in Church Walk built in the 1960s. The whole regeneration project is expected to take four years to complete once planning consent is granted.

The Falkirk Stadium

The Stadium is now an established sports and community venue that hosts top level football matches. Extensive office and commercial space is utilised by public and private sector organisations providing sustainable income. Further development is planned to extend the stadium through private investment.

The HELIX

A recent recipient of a £25 Million award from the Big Lottery's Living Landmarks programme, The HELIX plans to transform a vacant 300 hectare site between Grangemouth and Falkirk into a thriving environmental community.

Once completed, The HELIX will offer 34 km of paths and cycle networks, see 750,000 trees planted, feature five new biodiversity nature parks, create employment through community enterprise businesses and support new 'micro' businesses. In addition the project will fully reconnect the Forth & Clyde Canal to the Forth Estuary. A new section of canal and towpath will provide a massive improvement to navigation and 'The Kelpies', the world's largest equine sculptures will provide a new gateway to Scotland's inland waterways at a size (100ft) similar to The Falkirk Wheel.

Canal Corridor

The Falkirk Wheel has had a huge positive impact for the area and the restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals has created opportunities for development and regeneration at other sites along the canal corridor.

The HELIX proposal above is one such canal-related development. The adjacent Falkirk Gateway site has a canal frontage identified for commercial and leisure development. Other canalside sites at Rosebank

and Redding Park have already attracted large scale residential development, the latter regenerating a derelict industrial site. Land at Tamourhill is currently being progressed for marketing for residential and leisure uses, including a marina. Tamfourhill's location adjoining the Falkirk Wheel offers the opportunity for integration with the Falkirk Wheel site and visitor experience, including the creation of improved road access to the Wheel.

Stakeholders and Communications

The My Future's in Falkirk initiative has reached and involved a wide range of people in the local area and beyond. Businesses and Young People are of particular importance.

Falkirk Business Panel

The Falkirk Business panel was established in 2003. Its membership has grown to over 700 local businesses. In 2006 a Leadership Group of 20 members was formed to shape ongoing activities. These include local development update presentations, seminars, networking and other activities to help businesses connect and communicate with each other and with the public sector agencies. The first Falkirk Business Fair was held in April 2008 and the first Annual Business Conference will take place in September 2008.

Engaging Young People

The My Future's in Falkirk Initiative is helping the Falkirk area change for the better. The involvement and enthusiasm of young people in the future of their area is being harnessed through a wide range of activities organised around six theme groups –

- Business and Education Links
- Culture, Arts and the Creative Industries
- Vocational Training and Employment
- Science Technology and Innovation
- Your Community and Environmental Projects
- Marketing and Communications

Surveys in 2005 and 2008 have shown young people's perception of the area is becoming more positive. 75% of young people state they are proud of their area and My Future's in Falkirk has a substantial level of recognition.

Marketing Falkirk for Business

The Marketing Falkirk for Business project has put in place a marketing and communications strategy which aims to position Falkirk as a place to live, work and invest. It was part funded by the European Regional Development Fund over the period 2003 – 2007. The marketing strategy continues to be updated through an annual marketing plan.

Surveys of businesses conducted in 2006 and 2008 show a positive trend in opinion and perceptions of Falkirk. 92% of businesses agree the area is a good place to do businesses.

Conclusions

The My Future's in Falkirk initiative continues to be an excellent example of what can be achieved to diversify and grow a local economy when public agencies and businesses work together with common objectives in a spirit of trust and commitment. It also highlights the value and benefits of engagement with the local community and especially young people.

The impact of the various projects in terms of jobs and investment, both current and projected, has exceeded expectations. Particularly pleasing, however, is the sense of growing confidence in the Falkirk area as a place in which businesses want to operate and invest and people want to live and visit.

My Future's in Falkirk's projects and activities have helped raise the area's economy and its profile to a new level. From this higher platform, a further range of opportunities comes into view and these must now be prioritised and pursued in order to maintain the momentum and maximise the area's contribution to Scotland's economic performance. Critical to this is the provision of infrastructure and an attractive environment to continue to attract private sector investment.

The area's economic potential has been underlined by the Scottish Government's inclusion of the Grangemouth Freight Hub as one of 9 national projects in the draft National Planning Framework 2. The opportunities arising from investment in road, rail and sea transport and distribution facilities in the Falkirk area will help drive future growth not only in the local Falkirk economy but at a national level.