

Local employers urged to support young people by Backing Falkirk's Future

Statistics show the current recession is continuing to have a disproportionate impact on young people. In summer 2011, 1,625 young people left secondary schools in the Falkirk Council area seeking a positive destination and early indications reveal that just over 200 of those young people are unemployed. In total there are around 2000 young people under 24 years in the area who are currently unemployed and seeking an opportunity.

However, local employers can help through the 'Backing Falkirk's Future' scheme. Led by Falkirk Council's Employment and Training Unit (ETU) on behalf of the Workforce Plus Partnership, the scheme provides new and additional assistance for employers to help develop and train the workforce of the future. It has been calculated that if 10% of local businesses offered one training place, youth unemployment in the area would be cut by 25%.

Allied International, based in Grangemouth, have been working with the ETU since 2008 and have recently won the Best Training and Development award at the Falkirk Herald Business awards in November.

For more information on how to get involved please call the Employer Engagement Team on 0800 028 0363 or email etu@falkirk.gov.uk.



Craig McKinnon, Apprentice Engineer at Allied International

Peter Duncan, Managing Director of Allied International UK Ltd said "We are committed to the continued development and training of all our employees, and appreciate that the young people of Falkirk should be given every chance of equal access to the opportunities that arise within our business."

He added "The young people who come to our business via the ETU are quickly dovetailed into regular reviews, training sessions, and weekly meetings. This runs pretty seamlessly alongside their more formal, accredited training being delivered through the ETU and has proven to be a successful formula, and one that we intend to continue to support."

The ETU are asking all local employers, regardless of size and sector to consider engaging with Falkirk Council to explore ways in which additional entry level posts for a young person aged 16 to 24 years could be created within their business.

In return the business benefits from:

- A free vacancy matching service to help them find the right person;
- Help to decide which Apprenticeship is right for their business needs and to identify an appropriate training provider;
- A Falkirk Council managed training programme which integrates into their daily business and meets national quality and industry standards;
- An allocated Employment and Training Co-ordinator who will support both the employer and their Apprentice throughout the process;
- Support with the costs of training for each individual recruited from the ETU's existing database of clients;
- The provision, where applicable, of an incentive to support the salary costs of each new Apprentice recruited from the ETU's existing database of clients.



The Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme – helping business run better

Rodger Querns, Network Rail Project Director, talks about the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP) and the benefit to business in Scotland:

Even if you are not one of the 90 million people who travel by train in Scotland each year the railway still has a big impact on Scotland and its business community.

Scotland's railway is diverse covering a large area of over 400 geographic miles, more than 2,500 daily services over 2,460 track miles, providing rapid access along busy commuter routes to our major cities while also supporting rural lifeline services. It also supports significant and increasing freight traffic particularly coal. The mix of traffic and its needs are challenging and growing.

Thousands of people rely on rail to get them to work every morning and home every night. Businesses rely on these people getting to their work. Businesses also rely on rail to transport their goods around the country; between ports, factories and shops, carrying fuel to our power stations and helping cut the cost of disruption and delay associated with road congestion.

The EGIP programme will deliver significant benefits for businesses across central Scotland, reducing journey times and increasing service levels across key routes.

The project will also further improve the appeal of rail as a greener alternative to the car and we are sure the public will be excited by the ambitious scale of this investment and the opportunities it will create for them.

Rail is vital to help Scotland build a thriving, sustainable and low-carbon economy and EGIP is key to building the capacity that Scotland needs to link its two major cities and the various commuter and business hubs in between.

Visit www.networkrail.co.uk/EGIP for more information.



Falkirk's Commuters save up to a third on house prices

A report by the Bank of Scotland has found commuters who work in Edinburgh but live half an hour's train ride away, such as Falkirk, can save up to 34% on the cost of their homes and 11% when commuting within half an hour of Glasgow.

The savings are substantial enough to offset the cost of an annual rail pass, which on average costs around £1700-£1800. The bank claimed the average house price in towns 30 minutes away such as Falkirk is £133,000 compared to £201,647 in Edinburgh.

Falkirk residents, being mid way between Edinburgh and Glasgow, have the best of both worlds, having the option for one member of a household to work in Edinburgh and another in Glasgow.

It remains to be seen whether improved transport links in future will increase house prices in the local area. In Aberdeen, house prices are significantly dearer in commuter areas such as Inverurie and Stonehaven than they are in the city itself.

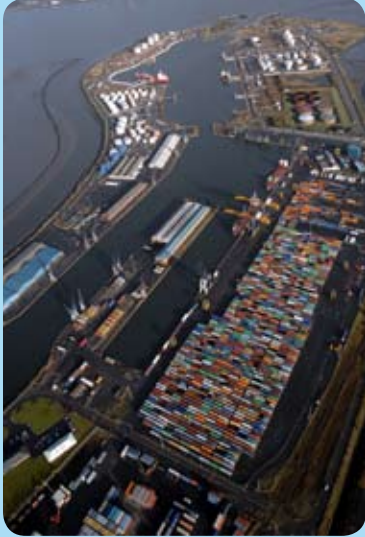
Your chance to comment on the Local Development Plan

A major consultation has been launched on Falkirk Council's new style Local Development Plan which will guide housing, business and infrastructure development in the area over the period 2014 to 2034.

The first stage in preparing the plan is the Main Issues Report (MIR) which focuses on the main changes and key issues facing the area, options for future growth and where new housing and land for employment use should be located.

Community roadshow events are being held at locations throughout the area, and details of these can be found on the Council's website.

For further information contact the Local Development Plan Team on 01324 504739 or email ldp@falkirk.gov.uk or you can inspect the MIR at libraries, One Stop Shops or online at www.falkirk.gov.uk. Please note that the deadline for comments is Friday 10th February 2012.



Falkirk given green light for massive investment plan

It was recently announced that Falkirk Council and its partners have been given approval to progress to the next stage of the Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) scheme, in which it will work with the Scottish Futures Trust to develop a full business case for £52m worth of investment.

The council and its partners are therefore one step closer to launching a total infrastructure programme for the Falkirk area worth £164m that will lead to investment into key strategic road improvements, Grangemouth flood defences and site enabling works. The project has the potential to create over 5000 local jobs and generate £372m of additional value to the Scottish economy as sites are developed over the life of the TIF.

The innovative TIF model uses receipts from business rates in targeted locations as a means of funding infrastructure works to stimulate development and create jobs. New to the UK, it has been successfully used for a long time in the US and other countries.

in the headlines

Bakkavör to create 60 jobs at new Scottish plant

Bakkavör are to create approximately 60 new jobs at their Caledonian Produce site in Bo'ness when they open a second factory in December. The fresh food producers will then employ over 1000 staff at the Caledonian Produce site.

Food Manufacture, 12/10/11

Hewden opens new Grangemouth depot

Hewden, who hire plant and equipment to Ineos in Grangemouth, has opened a new depot on the Ineos site. Ineos recently placed an order for more than 40 cranes with Hewden for use on its Grangemouth site. The relocation to a larger depot has enhanced Hewden's response time and capabilities to its customers in the area and the company expect to recruit more staff in the coming months.

Construction Index, 01/10/11

Airdrie Savings Bank to open new Falkirk branch

The UK's last remaining independent bank has expanded out of its Lanarkshire home area for the first time, with a new branch set to open in Falkirk. The bank has a 175 year history and is creating five new jobs in the town. Some of the biggest names in Scottish business have together invested £10million to help the bank's expansion, including Sir Brian Souter of Stagecoach who will officially open the Falkirk branch on 22nd September.

Business 7, 15/09/11



New name for canalside development

Portdownie is the new name for the planned 58 acre mixed use development bordering the Falkirk Wheel. Project partners British Waterways and Falkirk Council explained the name is actually the historic name by which the canal basin is known. A new website, www.portdownie.com, has been launched to provide more information.

Comproscotland.com, 06/09/11



Campbells Prime Meat battles back from major fire

Campbells Prime Meats, suppliers to hotels and restaurants across Scotland, including the Gleneagles Hotel and Rangers and Celtic football clubs, have achieved a 10% increase in turnover after a blaze which destroyed its main factory in Broxburn. Their new premises near Linlithgow have increased production capacity by 60 per cent.

Business 7, 18/07/11

Dow boosting additive capacity at Grangemouth

Dow Chemicals are expanding their Grangemouth plant to manufacture more additives for use in rigid packaging, consumer durables and transport applications. The expansion will increase capacity by 10,000 tonnes per year and is expected to be completed in the latter part of 2011.

PRW, 08/08/11

Airth Castle spa extension go ahead

Falkirk Council has approved plans for Airth Castle Hotel and Spa to expand its spa, enabling it to double in size and to introduce new facilities for both its members and hotel guests. A programme of bedroom refurbishment has already taken place and an additional 50 bedrooms will be built in future.

Stirling Observer, 10/11/11



ADL's new three-axle double deck for export markets. Known as the Enviro500 it can carry 100 passengers.



Sitting pretty. The finishing touches are added to another ADL bus, one of 2,000 that will be built this year.

Just the ticket – as bus giant bucks the trend

Despite the toughest conditions in the manufacturing sector for over 30 years there is one Scottish company that is bucking the trend, growing rapidly and pioneering low-emission solutions that are setting the standard for transport operators globally.

Falkirk-based Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL) is now the UK's leading bus and coach manufacturer, employing 2,000 people worldwide, 900 of whom are based at their principal manufacturing facility and company HQ in Glasgow Road, Camelon.

ADL's pioneering range of fuel-efficient green vehicles are leaving their competitors in their wake, with record orders placed in 2011. ADL now supplies over 50 per cent of all new buses registered in the UK, with around 65 per cent of London's bus fleet, which carries six million passengers per day, being ADL products. Similarly, ADL buses are the backbone of transport fleets across the UK and in key export territories such as Hong Kong where more than four million people travel on their buses every day.

With new build partnerships in North America, China and New Zealand, it is little wonder that ADL has in recent years emerged as the fastest growing bus and coach manufacturer in the western world. Behind their success lies the quality and accessibility of their light-weight, aluminium vehicles, coupled with their acknowledged reliability, durability, ease of maintenance and market leadership in terms of fuel economy and reduced emissions.

In just three years, in the teeth of the world's toughest recession for decades, ADL has increased its turnover more than 100% to £360m – and expects to grow that figure by a further 20% to circa £440m next year. Deliveries in 2012 will also see ADL increase exports from 20% to 35%.

In the meantime, ADL has announced a string of further business successes in recent weeks, including orders worth £100m for double decks that will go into operation in Ottawa and Toronto, adding to the North American fleets they already have in Vancouver, New York, Washington DC., Las Vegas, San Francisco and Seattle.

In parallel with this they have won new business in Auckland, New Zealand, and a recent order for 100 double deck buses to support FirstGroup services at the 2012 London Olympics.

Simultaneously ADL has also been driving forward its strategy to expand its range of hybrid-electric vehicles, which deliver 35% fuel and CO2 reductions. Announcing recently that a further 12 single-deck hybrids will join the Barcelona fleet in June 2012, Group Corporate Affairs Director Bill Simpson said that ADL now has 350 hybrids in operation or in their current production programme, making them Europe's leading supplier of low carbon, hybrid-electric buses.

He also confirmed that ADL intends to take its hybrid technology to a new level in 2012, which will increase fuel efficiency dramatically. Speaking to the press at Europe's largest bus and coach exhibition in Belgium, he said: "We are on the brink of reducing fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by 50%. If we had suggested that three years ago people would have described us as loopy – but we are now within touching distance of the 50% factor."

He added: "There is little doubt that we are leading the world in terms of low carbon technology and its application to light-weight buses. Now is the time for Government and other influencers to get off the fence, support British innovation and help us accelerate research and development that can secure our position at the forefront of the industry. Hiding behind the global economic crisis is the easy way out. What we need are policies that will stimulate manufacturing, create jobs and keep Britain at the forefront of the technology race."

Gordon Grant, INEOS



Gordon Grant, CEO, INEOS Grangemouth Services & Infrastructure is our featured interview in this edition.

INEOS is a leading manufacturer of petrochemicals, speciality chemicals and oil products. The company operates a global network of sites including the facility in Grangemouth; which alone employs over 1,400 people. The company has also been at the forefront of helping to generate a highly skilled workforce in Scotland.

Gordon is living proof of the opportunities that exist in Falkirk and he is passionate about 'My Future's In Falkirk' and its mission to build lasting economic prosperity.

He grew up in the local area and moved back to work in the thriving petrochemicals sector. Gordon has no doubt that the petrochemicals industry is vitally important to Falkirk and Scotland as a whole.

For more information check out www.ineos.com

Q. Best piece of business advice you ever received?

A. Quite early in my career I was given a piece of advice by my boss who said: "It's good to keep your options open, but don't let them get in the way of what you really want to do". Essentially, don't linger on the possibility something may happen in the future, go out there and make it happen.

Q. What makes your blood boil?

A. A lack of effort, people not trying, or when people don't realise they actually have the ability to do a job well. I also hate queuing – especially if the queue is being caused by someone that could make the queue disappear, this happened recently in an airport queue in Rome.

Q. What makes you happy and contented?

A. I am most contented at the end of a busy week when I take no work home with me for the weekend, this doesn't happen as often as I would like so is a rare pleasure.

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

A. Set your plans out at the start, then it's just a case of hard work – stick with it, and believe in your business.

Q. Careful plans or big risks?

A. I'm a planner, so careful plans every time for me. I feel very uncomfortable if there is no plan in place, and this goes for my business and family life.

Q. Best under pressure or well chilled?

A. I get great satisfaction when I've been working under pressure and then in the end it all comes together. When working under pressure you always have to devise a solution.

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

A. Periods of recession have always hit us hard, the 1980s and early 2000 in particular. We had to downsize significantly in 2002/3 from a workforce of 2800 to around 1600. I knew a large number of the people personally so this was a very hard time.

Q. Which famous person do you most admire and why?

A. I'm a big fan of Alex Ferguson; he's an incredibly talented manager and has worked his way to the very top of the game. Bill Shankly and Walter Smith are also up there – I'm a season ticket holder at Ibrox so I'm a big Walter Smith fan.

Q. Biggest fear?

A. Not being able to contribute, whether this is to society in general, at home, in the workplace or to charity.

Q. Last time you shouted at the TV?

A. Most definitely when a bad decision was given against Rangers, that's the only time you'll hear me shouting at the TV.

Q. Best deal?

A. One of the best deals I've been involved in was when I was managing a small plant in Grangemouth under a large Japanese company agreement. The plant wasn't making any money at all and we were looking at potentially closing it down. However, one of the Japanese company's plants in Japan had a big failure and they needed product and some of the components from the Grangemouth plant. We ended up selling the product and components back at a very good profit.

Q. Best recipe for winding down?

A. My favourite ways to wind down would be a quiet meal with my wife, and at the weekend playing golf or a day sailing.

Q. In a perfect world...

A. I'm in control, the business is making money while I'm playing golf.

Q. Favourite place?

A. One of my favourite places in Scotland has to be the Cairngorms, in summer or winter. I also love Italy and have been to Venice, Milan and Rome, and skiing in the winter.

Q. With hindsight...

A. I don't tend to look back too much, I'm very much a forward thinking person, you can't change the past but you can affect the future.

Q. Dream car?

A. The best car I've ever owned was an Audi RS4; however my dream car would be an E Type Jaguar.

Q. Favourite city?

A. Paris or Edinburgh. I was born in Edinburgh and went to university in the city so I have a lot of good memories of the city. I love the balance Paris has between the modern and the historic.

Q. Favourite book?

A. I'm not much of a book reader, however when I'm on holiday I'll pick up a sports autobiography, the most recent one I've read is by the Scottish cyclist Robert Millar.

Q. Hobbies?

A. Golf, sailing, and skiing in the winter. I try and get to as many Rangers games as possible but consider that more of a pastime than a hobby.

Q. Favourite eatery/restaurant

A. To be honest, I prefer eating at home; I find it far more relaxing. I'm also a vegetarian so finding a restaurant with good vegetarian options can often prove difficult. I used to frequent Henderson's of Edinburgh regularly as a student and still occasionally go back now. My family and I also enjoy The Railbridge Bistro and Queen's Spice Tandoori in South Queensferry.



Odenwald visitors are welcomed to Falkirk by Depute Provost Allyson Black, Cllr Adrian Mahoney and the Antonine Guard.

Falkirk's twin keen to make business links

A delegation from Falkirk district's twin area of Odenwald in Germany visited the area recently - and took a step back in time. The delegation visited parts of the Roman Antonine Wall at Bonnybridge, Falkirk and Bo'ness.

The party was welcomed to Falkirk district by Depute Provost Allyson Black and the area's tourism convener, Cllr Adrian Mahoney. As well as visiting the area's historic sites, the visitors also discussed future arrangements to encourage twinning between the two areas. One idea is to make a link between each area's websites and to translate information on Falkirk's business and tourism sectors into German. It is hoped this may start to encourage business links between the two countries and to ensure wider promotion of the areas for tourism.

Odenwald features part of the German Roman frontier, the Limes, and has a wealth of Roman remains and visitor attractions. They are bidding to become part of the official Frontiers of the Roman Empire Site (which includes Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall).

For more information on how you can get involved with twinning please visit:
www.falkirktwinning.org

Businesses invited to partner with Hippodrome in its Centenary year

2012 is set to be a busy year for the Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness. Sunday 11th March marks the building's 100th anniversary and a birthday party will be held to launch a year of special screenings, workshops and projects including the return of the Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema on 16-18 March 2012.

The 2011 Festival of Silent Cinema attracted 1,500 visitors and sparked the imagination of the Scottish and UK media with coverage in six major national newspapers, BBC and STV television, BBC Radio Scotland, Central FM, Bo'ness Journal and Falkirk Herald and numerous other online news outlets, blogs and tweets.

Organisers of the 2012 Festival and Hippodrome Centenary celebrations want to develop partnership initiatives with businesses in the area to offer a new and innovative platform for promotional opportunities and to strengthen engagement with the community. From transport and accommodation providers to corporate sponsors for Gala screenings, the organisers are keen to hear from you.

If you would like to know more about this unique opportunity, please contact the Hippodrome Centenary Producer Shona M Thomson at shonam.thomson@falkirk.gov.uk.

Falkirk Business Panel Conference – Inspiring and Growing Business



Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive of Falkirk Council

Over 130 delegates turned out for the business panel's annual conference on 23rd September, hosted by the Macdonald Inchyra Hotel and Spa near Polmont. With a jam-packed agenda fulfilling the theme of "Inspiring and Growing Business", attendees were treated to a series of compelling presentations from motivational speakers.

Gerry Godley of Godley Corporate– Executive Coaching urged the delegates to "Be the leader we need to be to move things forward" and Jim Hamill of Enterprise 2.0 returned for a second year to update the business community on the ever evolving topic of social media.

A Falkirk flavour was added to the day with the presence of two leading local companies. Conference host Bill Whiteford led an interview style session with Curt Hopkins, CEO of Redeem, and Chief Executive of Alexander Dennis, Colin Robertson, spoke of his experience of managing change. Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive of Falkirk Council updated the audience on a number of local projects including the bid for TIF funding (see pg 3 of this supplement).

Feedback after the event has shown delegates considered the conference to be well worth attending, with very interesting and motivating speakers and a great opportunity to network with likeminded people. If you missed it this year, make sure you look out for it next year.



In this edition, the Economic Outlook column focuses on the local housing market as well as providing an update on recent economic statistics.

The housing market in the Falkirk area

It seems like almost every day there is a media report on the state of the housing market, but few discuss the market in the Falkirk area. Like most places in the UK, the Falkirk housing market has been hit by the recession. However, while average prices have fallen modestly, the greatest impact has been on the volume of house sales and the number of new homes being constructed.

Figures from Registers of Scotland (RoS), the Government agency responsible for recording all property transactions in Scotland, show that the number of house sales in Falkirk rose to over 4,500 in 2007, but plunged to only 1,800 in 2009 before recovering to just over 2,000 in 2010. The first three quarters of 2011 suggest that the number of sales in 2011 is likely to be around the same as in 2010. The decrease in sales in Falkirk to 44% of the 2007 total is a greater decrease than in Scotland as a whole, where sales fell to 48% of the highest annual number of sales.

New build figures also show a significant decline. In 2003/04 just over 1,000 new homes were built in the Falkirk area. This fell to 450 in 2008/09 and under 400 in 2010/11 – the lowest figures since the 1980s.

In contrast, house prices have shown only a small decrease from their peak. The highest quarterly average house price in the Falkirk area according to RoS was £135,188 in the last quarter of 2007. This had fallen to £124,082 in the third quarter of 2011 – a decrease of 8%, but prices showed an increase of 1.7% compared to the same period in 2010. Falkirk average house prices are below the Scottish average which currently stands at £163,091.

Until the uncertainty in the economy decreases and the availability of mortgage finance eases, the local housing market, like the national market, is likely to remain sluggish.

Economic growth

Like the frequency of reports on the housing market, there seems to be almost daily reports on the future prospects for the UK economy.

The most recent GDP figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the UK economy grew by 0.5% in the third quarter of 2011 – a higher than expected level and a considerable improvement on the second quarter figure of 0.1%. However, analysts suggest that the third quarter figure may be the result of a bounce back in the economy following the low growth in the second quarter due to one off factors.

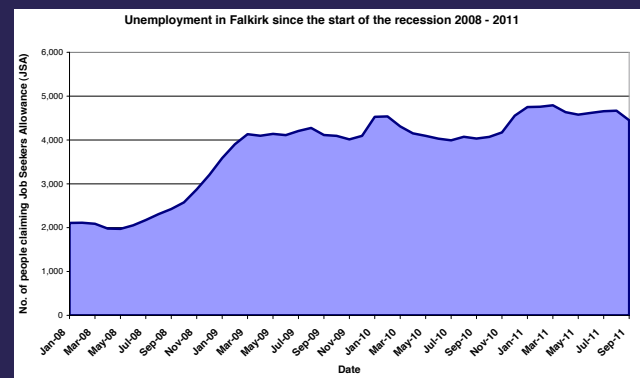
Growth forecasts remain gloomy. The latest forecast for growth in the Scottish economy is for growth of only 1.5% in 2011.

Local unemployment

The monthly figures on the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) provides the most immediate information available on the state of the local economy.

Unemployment in Falkirk fell slightly in September 2011 but has remained at around 4,500 throughout 2011. This represents 4.5% of the working age population who are claiming JSA. This is slightly above the Scottish average of 4.1%.

Unemployment started to rise in June 2008 and rose sharply till the spring of 2009 at the start of the recession. For the next 18 months unemployment stayed around 4,000 before rising again at the end of 2010. Since the start of the recession, the unemployment rate has been above the Scottish average while it was lower than the Scottish average for the two years before 2008.



Source: NOMIS

For further information on the economy in the Falkirk Council area please visit the following links:

Falkirk as a location:
www.myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk/research

The Falkirk Council Research and Information web pages:
www.falkirk.gov.uk/statistics

Information on the housing market:
www.ros.gov.uk/
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/chma/statistics

the future is something we create

find out more at myfuturesinfalkirk.co.uk

MY FUTURE'S IN
falkirk

Looking for Business Property in the Falkirk Area?

The Business Property Register is an ideal point of reference for companies or individuals looking for property in which to start a new business venture, relocate or expand an existing business.

Visit www.falkirk.gov.uk/property or call Jennifer Anton at Falkirk Council on 01324 590975.



Falkirk Council