



Agenda Item 7

Economic Strategy Update

Falkirk Council

Title: Economic Strategy Update

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 September 2019

Submitted By: Director of Development Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update on the progress of the Falkirk Economic Strategy 2015-2025.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee notes the progress on the Falkirk Economic Strategy**

3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in April 2019 a presentation was given on the progress of the Falkirk Economic Strategy *Growth, Investment & Inclusion 2015-25*. Members acknowledged the work that had been undertaken and asked for a further report with details relating to the actions being taken forward in relation to the strategy.
- 3.2 The Falkirk Economic Partnership developed the area's economic strategy: *Growth, Investment & Inclusion 2015-25*. The Partnership assists in progressing the efforts of the Council and its partners to enable the growth of the area's economy, attract investment and ensure benefits for the wider community.
- 3.3 As a key element of this work, the partnership is leading the development of an Investment Zone (growth deal) proposal intended to help grow the area's economy, recognising its opportunities in the chemicals, manufacturing, energy and logistics sectors. A business case for the Investment Zone will be submitted later this year for agreement with UK and Scottish Governments.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Delivery of the economic strategy by the Economic Partnership focuses in particular on the delivery of the Investment Zone proposal. This is intended to attract funds to support delivery of several major projects and a report on the outcome of this work will be prepared for the Executive in due course.

4.2 Meantime a number of projects are being taken forward by the Council and its partners in relation to the three main themes of the economic strategy:

- Growth
- Investment
- Inclusion

The following summarises the progress being made in relation to each of these themes:

A. Growth:

i) Business Support

4.3 The Council operates the Business Gateway in the Falkirk area and also manages the Forth Valley contract awarded in relation to the period October 2017 - 2022. It recently secured Phase 2 of external European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding of £145k per annum for the Falkirk area (£375k per annum for Forth Valley) for Expert Help services to 2022. In addition it secured £62k for the Falkirk area (£150k for Forth Valley) of external funding for delivery of a Digital Boost programme in March 2019.

4.4 The Business Gateway provides support in segments including marketing, finance, workshops and aftercare. Support measures for Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) events, tourism business support and development are also delivered. Support for the area's rural sector businesses is delivered through liaison with the Kelvin Valley & Falkirk LEADER programme.

4.5 In the period April 2018 to June 2019:

- Business Gateway (BG) supported 2363 unique clients
- Customer satisfaction surveys indicate that 97% of businesses are satisfied with the service provided, 98% said that the support they received was of benefit to their business and 96% said they would recommend the service.
- *Start-Ups* - BG service supported 409 businesses to start trading in the Falkirk area, the majority of these will be sole traders that operate from home premises with a turnover with less than the VAT threshold of £85K. Those that want to grow by creating jobs, developing products, selling overseas, take on premises, get an enhanced level of support to achieve their ambitions, sixty eight businesses met this criteria and received this support.
- *Growth Business – (£200k+ of turnover)*: There is significant support for existing businesses with ambitions to grow. Those who want to increase turnover by more than £200,000 can access specialised support in areas such as IT, procurement, digital media, marketing, finance, environmental support which is funded through ERDF. Additionally growing businesses can access HR support and benefit from a number of initiatives offered by Scottish Enterprise (SE). BG

Falkirk has supported 37 businesses to achieve their growth ambition to increase turnover by £200,000.

- *Growth Business – (£400k+ turnover)*: BG works closely with SE, where businesses can access a programme of support if their turnover increases by more than £400,000. BG Falkirk has engaged with 24 businesses in the £400k category.
- A number of businesses will progress to being account managed by Scottish Enterprise depending on their sector growth ambitions and job impact; during the period April 2018-June 2019 4 businesses were account managed in this way.
- From April 2018 – June 2019 BG delivered 114 workshops with 758 attendees, these are aimed at both start up and existing business clients.
- Digital Boost has been highly successful in the Falkirk area. Business Gateway delivered 27 workshops with 216 attendees supporting 47 businesses.
- Access to Finance - Business Loan Scotland has paid £100,000 to 1 business and 3 Falkirk Loan funds loans have been paid totalling £29,000.
- To support businesses with Brexit all public sector agencies are directing enquiries to www.prepareforbrexit.scot. This is the official and most up to date source of support from the public sector and includes information on sector impact, grant assistance, Brexit checklist and some case studies. BG Falkirk has delivered a number of events which have had expert speakers on this topic. Brexit is also covered in the internationalisation workshops and events delivered in partnership with SE.

Business Gateway Achievements Summary:

Start Up	409
Early stage growth	68
Growth Advisory Service	37
Growth Pipeline	24
Account Managed	4
Workshops delivered	114
Workshop attendees	758

ii) Tourism

- 4.6 The Falkirk area has seen continued growth in the tourism sector with an increase of 2% in visitor numbers between 2017 and 2018 and 10% increase in visitors staying in the area. This reflects the recent focus of marketing activity towards promoting 2/3 nights stays. Since 2009 there has been a 57% increase in visitor numbers, 74% increase in economic impact, 28% increase in employment (2,138 now employed in the sector) and over 30% increase in day visitors. This work takes forward the Falkirk Area Tourism Strategy and the work of the VisitFalkirk Tourism Partnership.

In terms of achievements, delivery of the key tourism strategy priorities is being maintained as follows:

- an industry led VisitFalkirk Tourism Partnership with a formal company structure has been established and meets regularly.
- 2018/19 Visit Scotland Growth Fund marketing campaign to promote the area for tourism held up as an exemplar of best practice by Visit Scotland. The campaign reached in excess of 1.5 million views through social media channels.
- as a result Visit Scotland encouraged a further funding application, approved in April 19 and work has begun on delivering an accessible tourism marketing campaign, a first for Scotland.
- in partnership with Visit West Lothian, Visit Falkirk was successful in a joint bid to Visit Scotland for funding to produce film itineraries relating to Outlander etc.
- two successful marketing campaigns with Visit Scotland were delivered, focussing on the Falkirk area, which exceeded their KPI's. The Autumn campaign was 177% above target, Spring Campaign 114% above target (13,067 website landings) and video adverts achieved 122% above target with 544,114 views.
- Continued partnership working with Visit Scotland in the coordination and delivery of a travel trade event, the production of Forth Valley travel trade itineraries, an online interactive map (a first for Scotland), 'Fam' trips for Scottish Canals & Visit Scotland staff, attendance at the World Travel market and many more initiatives.
- Social media presence continues to grow, followers to Visit Falkirk Channels are:
 - Facebook 14.4k
 - Instagram 2.7k and
 - Twitter 2.8k
- Bi-annual tourism networking events for businesses in our area delivered with attendance in excess of 60, receiving excellent feedback.
- Continued close liaison with Business Gateway and LEADER teams with a proactive cross referrals – the tourism officer attends all meetings with tourism businesses to ensure they are signposted to all the correct areas/schemes of support available from Visit Scotland etc.
- Liaison with other Council services eg. - with the Council's Licensing team introduced tourism FAQs into taxi drivers knowledge test and produced fact sheets which are distributed as standard to any taxi driver applying or renewing their licence.

iii) Town Centres Update

- 4.7 The Council is pursuing a programme of activity to enhance the performance of town centre in the face of significant challenges arising from wider economic pressures and changes in retailing habits. The progress being made is summarised as follows:

Revitalising Falkirk

- The Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was completed in 2018 on budget, investing a total of £5.5m (with grant funding of £2m HLF & £1.6m

HES respectively) in town centre environment and engagement projects.

Over the five year delivery programme this initiative:

- awarded 86 individual grants, which helped to repair 32 different buildings in the town centre.
 - improved over 6,500sqm of public realm, using heritage materials such as granite kerbs and Caithness flag stone paving.
 - helped bring 225sqm and 11 empty units back into use.
 - delivered heritage construction training opportunities to over 1,000 young people, contractors and members of the public.
 - engaged with over 40,000 people through over 50 heritage engagement activities.
 - trained 8 new tour guides, to deliver heritage tours of the town centre.
- a series of town centre workshops took place involving local stakeholders leading to the development of the Falkirk Town Centre Action Plan. The action plan sets out the strategic vision for the town centre as a vibrant hub for interaction including:-
 - delivery of a new HQ and Arts Centre serving Council, community and partners.
 - exploration of tourism opportunities
 - improvement of connectivity and deliver improved business, resident and tourism infrastructure
 - reinvigoration of retail including start-ups through intensive support/training/mentoring
 - development of a calendar of events in collaboration with partners to support local business and encourage community involvement – Healthy High Street/BID
 - attraction of residential and extended town centre living – including use of vacant buildings
 - tackling declining population through confrontation of anti-social elements and creation of environmental improvements.
 - a new Revitalising Falkirk Partnership has been established involving business, Council, property and land owners, industry, transport and education partners to drive the delivery of the Falkirk Town Centre Action Plan.

Denny

- the town centre has been the subject of a major redevelopment project, Phase 1 of which is completed.
- marketing of Phase 2 proved unsuccessful and therefore further considerations around housing/mixed use opportunities are being explored.
- Phase 3 missives are concluded and the proposal is now subject to planning approval.

- Denny WiFi Project - as Scotland's First Digital Town, Denny town centre has state of the art WiFi and a bespoke town centre website developed to support business, visitors and local residents.

Grangemouth

- *Community Links Consultation* - as part of locality planning for Falkirk East, a 'Making Places' consultation took place to develop a Community Action Plan for Grangemouth. This includes the town centre and Charlotte Dundas shopping centre. The design element of the project was provided by Architecture & Design Scotland and Scottish Futures Trust.
- Issues highlighted include short-medium term improvements however commitment to a more strategic plan is necessary to address more entrenched problems for these centres.
- the report has been circulated and its findings will inform project development including elements relating to housing, employment, civic pride, town centre and health and well-being.
- Feedback sessions are currently being arranged for late September.

Scottish Government's Town Centre Capital Fund

Falkirk's allocation of the fund (£1.976m) will be invested in town centres where vacancies are proportionately higher – Grangemouth, Falkirk and Bo'ness.

B. Investment:

i) Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) initiative

- 4.8 Falkirk TIF is a £67m major initiative brought forward by Falkirk Council, in partnership with the Scottish Government to help boost the area's economy and improve infrastructure to help promote development in specific identified locations. A proportion of the non-domestic rates income generated within the TIF 'red-lined' boundary is retained by the Council in order to repay the borrowing for the cost of infrastructure over 25 years. The following progress has been made:

- Since commencing in 2013, £6m of infrastructure work has been completed, including the M9 Junction 6 improvements.
- During 2018/19 lead-in development work has progressed on the planned Junction 5 M9 junction improvements with initial utility diversions and design work leading to a start on site in October 2019.
- Design work is ongoing for the A9/A904 Westfield road and bridge infrastructure project with consultation taking place in 2020 and an expected site start in 2021.
- Work on a new Low Carbon Vehicle Hub has commenced at the Falkirk Stadium. The contractor is on site and completion expected in December 2019. Project cost is £1.4m with £560k contribution secured from Low Carbon Transport & Travel Challenge Fund & Transport Scotland.

- Since the Falkirk TIF project commenced in 2013, the TIF red line sites have seen 75,669 sq m of new commercial development bringing new companies to the area employing 1314 staff. By April 2020 total infrastructure investment is expected to be £10m.

ii) Falkirk Gateway

- 4.9 As reported to the Executive in February 2019 the Falkirk Gateway development site is moving forward with the appointment of Fintry Estates to deliver a mixed use commercial development on the site. The developer is progressing a retail impact assessment, an environmental impact assessment scoping report, site investigations and hotel demand assessment. A further report to Executive will be made later in 2019 to confirm progress with this work and agree the terms of the proposed Development Agreement. It is expected that a planning application for the scheme will be submitted in 2020.

iii) Investment Zone:

- 4.10 The Investment Zone aims to deliver transformational and inclusive growth locally, regionally and nationally. It leads on from the ambitions set out in:

- the UK Government's Industrial Strategy
- the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 3 document,
- Falkirk Economic Partnership's, Growth: Investment: Inclusion, the economic strategy for Falkirk
- Chemical Sciences Scotland's 'Grangemouth 2025 Vision' document

The proposals align with similar city and growth deals established in other parts of the UK. The proposition seeks funding support in excess of £200m to deliver a series of measures to create a sustainable, long term investment area covering the Falkirk-Grangemouth area. This will help to create a smarter, greener, resilient and a more inclusive place, reinforcing Falkirk's profile as 'a dynamic and distinctive area at the heart of Central Scotland'. It will help to create jobs, increase innovation, exports and productivity and attract private investment.

The following progress has been made on the Investment Zone:

- the Council's Executive (Feb 2017) agreed that a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submission for the Investment Zone be made to UK and Scottish Governments.
- this work was positively received and, in October 2018, Executive agreed to move to the next stage of the bid process and develop the Outline Business Case.
- taking strategic direction from the Falkirk Economic Partnership, a Steering Group was formed to oversee the OBC preparation and submission. It includes Falkirk Council, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Futures Trust, Forth Valley College and Scottish Canals. A consultancy team, led by Grant Thornton has been commissioned to support preparation of the OBC submission.

- wide-ranging consultation with public and private sector stakeholders has taken place on the OBC via a series of project workshops.
- the OBC submission for the Investment Zone Growth Bid will exceed £200m, with contributions to be sought from UK and Scottish Governments.
- the final Investment Zone OBC will promote 3 main intervention themes *Innovative Industry*, *National Infrastructure* and *creating Great Places* and will be submitted to both Governments in September 2019.
- thereafter Heads of Terms require to be agreed (anticipated March 2020) and full business cases developed from that date with delivery of some projects commencing in 2021.

iv) Kelvin Valley & Falkirk (KV&F) LEADER

4.11 LEADER is an EU rural regeneration programme administered and partly funded by Scottish Government. The programme is delivered via a partnership of public, private and community organisations. The programme covers the period 2014 – 2020 and covers the geographical area of Kelvin Valley (Rural East Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire) and most of rural Falkirk. The programme is delivered and managed through a dedicated team located in the Growth & Investment Unit. The following progress has been made:

- The programme was initially granted a total of £2,824,399, with spend targets of £1,270,980 on community projects, £576,880 on farm diversification, £288,440 on joint projects with other LEADER programmes and £706,100 on admin etc.
- The initial KV&F funding has been fully allocated however the programme has recently been awarded another £181,124 for spend and claim by December 2020, giving a total award of £3,005,523.
- The programme has funded a total of 34 projects to a total of £2,448,193 and, when match funding is included, amounts to £5,088,236.
- There are several large projects, relating to the Antonine Wall, John Muir Way and local canals that deliver benefits to the total area with an investment by LEADER amounting to almost £700,000.
- Falkirk Council area has benefitted from the funding of twenty projects worth £1,250,357, realising a total local spend of £2,453,374
- Locally, the key success of LEADER is the impact it has offered key tourism and heritage assets, the Antonine Wall, the canals and the development of new holiday accommodation including campsites, glamping and new hotel accommodation. In total at least 124 new bed spaces are being created.
- By the end of the KV&F Programme 16.5 jobs will have been created and 14 safeguarded.

C. Inclusion

i) Employability

- 4.12 The principal activity in the promotion of inclusive growth relates to employability. The Council's Employment and Training Unit (ETU) provides a range of training programmes, advice, guidance and support and delivers a targeted service, increasingly for those most excluded from the labour market. Specific support is available for care experienced young people, workless parents, ex-offenders and those with health conditions and disabilities. Since April 2018, as the only local authority to win the newly devolved employment support service Fair Start Scotland, ETU has been increasingly supporting individuals (of all ages) with multiple barriers to entering the workplace.

The headline performance figures against the 3 key measurements are detailed below:

Performance Measure	Target	Achieved 2018/19	Achieved Q1 2019/20
No. engaged in Employment Training with Council support	980	1741 204%	733 75%
No. of Modern Apprentices (MA) in programmes managed by the Council	400	340 (85%)	179 45%
No. of unemployed people accessing jobs via Council funded/operated employability programmes	400	446 112%	96 24%

The significant increase in the number of people receiving employability support was due to the commencement of the Fair Start Scotland contract. This is much higher than profiled due to the number of voluntary referrals for support, especially individuals with more intense support needs.

The reduction in the number of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities is primarily a reflection of reducing Council budgets, vacancy management and an overall reduction in head count, resulting in less MA opportunities being provided across Council services.

A number of new initiatives and targeted programmes of support have been implemented to respond to the demand for more personalised and individual specialist support. This has led to the development of a partnership involving NHS Forth Valley and a range of third sector specialist providers. Some examples of new initiatives introduced by ETU are detailed below:

- A **condition management service** where health conditions are the main barrier to work through a partnership with NHS Forth Valley – 80 individuals to date have benefitted from this provision

- An **Individual Placement Support (IPS)** service in partnership with Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) for job seekers receiving support from Community Mental Health Services. Falkirk is the only Fair Start provider to deliver this contractual expectation and 30 individuals have participated in this support to date.
- First year of **Project Search** successfully delivered providing work based learning and experience for 11 individuals with learning disabilities in partnership with NHS Forth Valley, SERCO and Forth Valley College. 12 candidates are commencing a second programme.
- **Supported employment opportunities** provided for those with disabilities and additional support needs to ensure effective job matching, entry and progression by assigning a work coach and employment support worker. 40 Opportunities have been supported within the Council and with third sector to date.
- **Inclusive Communications** through sense checking with speech and language therapists and re-branding communication tools and approaches used when engaging excluded job seekers to ensure these are inclusive. New materials will be piloted with Carrongrange senior phase pupils.
- Implementing phase 1 of the national employability reform agenda through **No One Left Behind**, delivering an all age needs based key worker service enabling positive transitions from school.
- **Support to Employers** is delivered through a range of work based initiatives to help individuals move into fair and sustainable work.
- Programme design and delivery is **poverty proofed** to ensure access for all with active measures to support participation with any potential negative impact mitigated by appropriate provisions.

ETU is supporting the delivery of programmes and services supporting the council in meeting its duties under child poverty, equality and the Fairer Scotland contract with increasing movement towards a whole systems approach to deliver a **more inclusive and sustainable economy**

- 4.13 The performance of the Falkirk economy is monitored on an annual basis by SLAED, (the national local authority economic development officers network). Appendix 1 captures a summary of the Falkirk area economy using the suite of indicators established by SLAED published in its economic indicators framework report 2017-18.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Economic Strategy was developed through consultation involving a wide range of bodies, including a Policy Development Panel of the Council and:

Falkirk Economic Partnership

- 5.2 The Economic Partnership consulted extensively in the development of the economic strategy. The development of the Investment Zone for Falkirk has

involved extensive consultation with local businesses and other external government stakeholders.

Local Employability Partnership

- 5.3 There has been ongoing consultation via the Local Employability Partnership to evolve the area's employability programme.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Resources

- 6.2 The activities outlined in this report are delivered via existing resources.

Legal

- 6.3 There are no additional legal issues out-with the compliance and conditions related to external funding and contracts.

Risk

- 6.4 A suite of risk matrices are in place for major economic development projects being pursued by the Council.

Equalities

- 6.5 Protected characteristic groups are identified in action plans, and are targeted in particular through the work of the employability partnership. Measures relating to ensuring that growth offers benefits to the wider community will be integral to the work in developing the Investment Zone.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6 There are no immediate sustainability or environmental impact issues as these are addressed in the implementation of measures taken forward.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 In the progress of the economic strategy and work of the Economic Partnership, a solid foundation has been created to enable business growth, attraction of investment and an inclusive, more sustainable economy . These measures face inevitable challenges relating to the wider economic and

financial pressures facing the Council and its partners. However there are distinct opportunities in the Falkirk area around the work coming forward via the Investment Zone which aim to transform the area's economic prospects. The economic strategy gives a platform for this work to continue.

Director of Development Services

Contact:

Douglas Duff, Head of Planning & Economic Development, e-mail:

douglas.duff@falkirk.gov.uk

Pete Reid, Growth & Investment Manager, email: pete.reid@falkirk.gov.uk

Pamela Smith, Employment and Training Manager, email:

pamela.smith@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 03 September 2019

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: SLAED Indicators Framework report 2017-18: Falkirk

Background Papers:

Falkirk Economic Strategy 2015-25: *Growth:Investment:Inclusion*

<https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/business-investment/policies-strategies/docs/Falkirk%20Economic%20Strategy%202015-2025.pdf?v=201605171307>

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Ref	Indicator	Period	Council	Scotland	% of Scotland
I1	Economic Development Expenditure - estimated Capital Spend Revenue Spend	2017/18	£9,088,000 £136,000 £8,952,000	£498,030,000 £225,316,000 £272,714,000	1.8%
I2	Economic Development Staffing - estimated	2017/18	58.1	1280.43	4.5%
A1	Number of Attendees at Business Gateway Events	2017/18	1,009	30,722	3.3%
A2	Number of Attendees at Business Events provided by the Council	2017/18	389	15,906	2.4%
A3	Number of Companies Registered with SDP	2017/18	260	11,439	2.3%
OP1	No. of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity (No. of instances of support)	2017/18	463 (463)	14,328 (20,693)	3.2%
OP2	Number of Business Gateway Unique Customer Accounts	2017/18	1507	50,593	3.0%
OP3	Number of Companies Assisted by Scottish Development International	2017/18	33	2,485	1.3%
OP4	Number of Unemployed People that have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities	2017/18	1,072	49,942	2.1%
OP5	Percentage of Immediately Available Employment Land	2017/18	58.9%	40.8%	-
OP6	Number of Businesses Participating in SDP	2017/18	45	1,327	3.4%
OC1	Gross Value Added per Capita	2016	£20,457	£22,059	-
OC2	Gross Weekly Earnings – Residence Based Gross Weekly Earnings – Workforce Based	2017	£552.30 £540.30	£547.70 £547.30	-
OC3	Employment Rate	2017/18	76.0%	74.3%	-
OC4	New Business Starts per 10,000 Working Age Population	2016	51	64	-
OC5	Business Survival Rate (3 Year)	2013 -2016	59.1%	62.1%	-
OC6	Claimants in Receipt of Out-of-Work Benefits	2018	2.6%	2.6%	-
OC7	Working Age Population with Low/No Qualifications	2017	12.9%	10.8%	-
OC8	Town Vacancy Rate	2017/18	11.9%	11.5%	-
OC9	Number of Business Gateway start-ups that are Trading	2017/18	282	9,129	3.1%
OC11	Leverage of External Funding	2017/18	£2.43	£1.71	-
OC12	Number of Planned New Jobs from Completed Inward Investment Projects Number of Planned Safeguarded Jobs	2017/18	63 0	3,839 4,691	16% 0%
OC13	No. of Unemployed People that have Progressed to Employment from Participation in Council Funded/Operated Employability Activities	2017/18	752	16,469	4.6%

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Ref	Indicator	Period	Council	Scotland	% of Scotland
IG1	GVA per hour worked (£) GVA per job filled (£)	2016	£29.40 £47,008	£32.40 £51,384	-
IG2	Underemployment	2017	6.3%	8.0%	-
IG3	5 year % change in median income vs lowest quintile	2013-2018	-4.3%	-3.1%	-
IG4	GVA GVA by Growth Sector per head (Employment): <i>Food & Drink</i> <i>Financial & Business Services</i> <i>Life Sciences</i> <i>Energy</i> <i>Sustainable Tourism</i> <i>Creative Industries (incl. Digital)</i>	2016	£ * 43,76 3 * 112,32 5	*see below	-
IG5	Percentage of Employees earning less than Living Wage	2017	20.3%	18.4%	-
IG6	Percentage of Participation in Education, Employment & Training by 16-19 year olds	2018	92.2%	91.8%	-
IG7	Percentage of premises unable to access 10Mbit/s broadband	2018	1.6%	6.1%	-
IG8	Percentage of premises able to access Superfast Broadband	2018	93%	91.1%	-

Note: For IG4, sector totals for Scotland have not been included for the following reasons:

- Food and Drink excludes agriculture as the agriculture results (for Gross Value Added) are not available broken down by local authority area from the Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture. Therefore a Food and Drink (including Agriculture) Scotland total is not provided.
- Financial and Business Services relates only to those sectors fully covered in the Annual Business Survey (so excludes financial and insurance activities). Therefore a Financial and Business Services Scotland total is not provided.