

Falkirk Council
Action Plan for the Economic Downturn – Progress update

Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Intended Outcome	Progress As at January 2010	Next steps
<p>a) Promote a package of local business support assistance delivered via the Business Gateway and the Joint Working Agreement with FEAT, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a programme of business health checks/business development reviews and grant support to assist companies to identify areas to, for example, access financial support (e.g. Loan Funds, Hardship relief, overdraft or cash flow finance, external grant assistance), generate increased income (e.g. through marketing or promotion), and reduce operating costs. (Cost £60k) Assist businesses to access support, financial and non-financial, from non-Business Gateway sources, 	Community Services/Falkirk for Business/Business Panel	2009-10	<p>50+ Businesses assisted</p> <p>Financial savings to business</p> <p>Jobs safeguarded</p>	<p>Joint newsletter with Business Panel distributed</p> <p>Credit Crunch workshop programme undertaken by FEAT/Falkirk for Business 102 businesses attended.</p> <p>Business Review and Health Check programme in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 145 jobs safeguarded to date 13 businesses provided with grant support. <p>Business support marketing undertaken via Newsletters, Website</p> <p>Access to self-help web-based local and national grant database established.</p>	<p>Programme of downturn specific work completed.</p> <p>Business Support effort will be sustained through Business Gateway and Falkirk for Business activities. Additional resources have been sought via ERDF and East of Scotland Loan Fund – decisions awaited.</p>

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<p>where available. (Nil cost)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement, with FEAT, a local marketing campaign to promote Business Gateway services to start-up and existing businesses. (£10k) • Facilitate waste management and energy efficiency audits for Council commercial tenants to help reduce business costs. (Nil cost) • Convene a forum of Falkirk Council area property landlords to exchange views and agree actions during the economic downturn period. (Nil cost) • Continue to provide property-related support and assistance to Council commercial tenants. (Nil cost) • Conduct a series of networking opportunities for local companies via the Falkirk Business Panel 				<p>Property Landlords Forum event convened.</p> <p>Business Panel networking programme underway:</p> <p>Falkirk Business Fair held 12 June in Falkirk Town Hall. 52 stands, 400 visitors.</p> <p>Business Panel Conference at Falkirk Town Hall took place on 9th September - theme of 'Aspiration, Challenge, Opportunity'</p> <p>Pilot Family Business Support Programme launched via FFB/SFBA. 10 companies participated.</p>	
b) Assist local retailers, by asserting the value of shopping locally, promoting town centres, and progressing town centre regeneration	Community Services/Town Centre Management/FE AT/ Specialist	2009-10	Businesses assisted Financial savings to business	5 Retailer workshop events held in Falkirk and 4 district centres. (42 participants)	Sustain via Town Centre Management programme, Falkirk for Business Support and liaison with local

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a programme to support independent retailers to improve their trading performance. (£30k) Support and advice in accessing rates relief and other business support (Nil cost) Networking events for local retailers (Nil cost) 	independent retail consultant		<p>Jobs safeguarded</p> <p>Trading levels sustained</p>	<p>63 information packs issued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 Health Checks undertaken 13 jobs safeguarded. 7 new jobs created <p>Support for Retailer Programme obtained by SRC and interest obtained from other LAs</p> <p>7 retail master-classes underway – September – November. 55 participants.</p> <p>Grangemouth and Bo'ness Retail Groups grant supported.</p> <p>Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Grant award of £2m to Falkirk Town Centres to initiate package of capital works to upgrade retail environment and accelerate regeneration</p>	<p>Retailer/Events groups.</p> <p>Town Centre Regeneration programme continuing via MFiF Transforming Places activity programme.</p>
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				works. Project to improve town centre directional signage underway (TCRF)	
c) Review the Council's responsiveness to business in : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice services, • speed of decision-making and delegation • exercise of regulatory powers. 	Chief Executive	March 2009	Improved access to business advice Improved speed of decision-making for business	Falkirk for Business established. Advice line for Council business support established with new organisation. Process established for consideration of economic context and potential re-phasing of developer contributions in planning applications applied successfully in several cases. Review of invoice payment undertaken to reduce payment timescales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92.9% of all invoices within 30 days • 76.5% paid within 20 days 	Sustain via ongoing liaison with Falkirk for Business/Falkirk Council. Workshop with Business Growth Club – Planning, Property & Procurement.

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d) Initiating a programme to promote local tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upgrade local tourist signage, • programme of local events 	Community Services/Development Services/VisitScotland	2009-10	Improved access to tourist facilities Increased visitor numbers	<p>Workshop of Tourism operators/ stakeholders held. 43 attendees, from 22 businesses/ establishments plus VisitScotland and Falkirk Council.</p> <p>Discussions held with VisitScotland on enhancing access to VisitScotland information, research, advice and services.</p> <p>Forth Valley Tourism Partnership established and sector networking event held at Inchyra Grange Hotel.</p> <p>Tourism Action Plan established.</p> <p>Work underway to design road tourism signing scheme</p>	Sustain via Tourism Action Plan and work of Forth Valley Tourism Partnership.
e) Pursue the case for accelerated capital investment and progress the necessary planning and design work for	Development Services	2009	Improved access to Falkirk area Increased	£2.5m accelerated investment in capital programme for 2009/10	

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<p>investment under the recently announced Scottish Government capital programme fund to upgrade infrastructure links at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the A801 Avon Gorge • the Grangemouth Port/Freight Hub and Petrochemical complex • Motorway junctions (M9, M876) 			infrastructure investment	<p>Joint lobbying by Business Panel/FC on Avon Gorge/Grangemouth Freight Hub.</p> <p>Grangemouth freight hub included as priority in Scottish Govt's National Planning Framework. NPF2 research underway including proposal for Falkirk/Grangemouth Investment Zone. Scottish Government approval for CPOs for A801 upgrade.</p> <p>Business Panel meeting with Jim Mather, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism on 11 June 2009.</p>	<p>Sustain via My Future's in Falkirk – Business Connections programme.</p>
<p>f) Promote investment in new affordable housing and stimulate new housing development through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing 300 affordable houses in the next three years • developing partnerships with local RSLs and other housing agencies to deliver 	Corporate & Neighbourhood Services / Development Services	2009-10	<p>New Affordable Housing construction</p> <p>Investment levels in housing</p> <p>Community benefits achieved</p>	<p>Updated 2009 Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) was approved by Members in November 2009.</p> <p>RSL development</p>	<p>Sustain via on-going liaison with the Scottish Government Housing and Regeneration Division and Registered Social Landlords, including the RSL forum, in the context of the SHIP</p>

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<p>new homes for rent or low cost home ownership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting a Seminar with housing agencies, including Homes for Scotland to stimulate investment in house construction; • exploring opportunities for house construction on development sites • including community benefits clauses to new investment contracts 				<p>continues. 32 homes completed by Link HA in June 2009. A further 168 units are currently on site.</p> <p>Council new build programme approved for 100 dwellings. 5 projects delivering 54 dwellings will commence in 2009/10, supported by Scottish Government subsidy of £1.35m.</p> <p>Potential development opportunities reported to H&SC Committee in May and September 2009. A further funding contribution of £1.05m of Scottish Government resources secured in December 2009 for 42 properties. Site starts to commence December 2010.</p> <p>Details are currently awaited from the Scottish Government on bidding</p>	<p>Sustain via the Council's 3 year Housing Investment Programme 2010-2013</p>
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				<p>arrangements for a 3rd phase of funding.</p> <p>72 CBiP training and employment places created to date. Further opportunities continue to be explored.</p> <p>Report to BVF in September highlighted the adoption of 6 single steps to supporting SME's and the local economy through our approach to procurement.</p>	<p>Further develop through creation of cross service focus group</p> <p>Sustain through adoption of 6 steps and engagement with local business community</p>
g) Seek to accelerate £600,000 of its planned investment in business property through the capital programme	Community/ Finance Services	2009-10	Investment in business property	<p>Report to P&R March 2009 accelerating £600k of capital investment in business property (Economic Development Strategy Fund)</p> <p>External refurbishment works to units in Bankside Industrial Estate completed June</p>	<p>Sustain capital investment via Economic Strategy Fund 2010-13 and Business Property Reinvestment Programme (subject to capital receipts).</p>

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				<p>2009</p> <p>Work on refurbishment of Lodge House, Central Business Park, underway for March 2010 completion.</p> <p>Demolition of old industrial properties to begin in August, with September 2009 completion.</p> <p>Work underway to complete 5 small industrial units at Central Business Park.</p> <p>Arnotdale feasibility study commissioned</p> <p>Desk-top PMP re-investment site investigations underway.</p>	
h) Adopt a flexible response to maintain investment in regeneration schemes, extending timescales for delivery and reviewing upfront infrastructure commitments;	Community/Development /Law & Administration	2009-10	Investment levels maintained in regeneration	Development proposals being finalised for delivery of Town Centre regeneration at Denny, Bo'ness, and Grangemouth and for delivery of Falkirk Gateway	Sustain via Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and implementation of Town Centre programmes.

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				<p>Development Agreement concluded for Denny and outline planning application submitted.</p> <p>Development Agreement concluded for Bo'ness</p> <p>Progressing Development Agreement for Grangemouth.</p> <p>Successful Town Centre Regeneration Fund bid - £2m award secured.</p> <p>Further bid for £1m for outlying villages and local centres.</p>	
i) Extend the flexibility of the Council's approach to planning – reviewing the Council's approach to Section 75 agreements and material considerations in planning applications to attract investment and maintain jobs;	Development Services	2009-10	Investment in construction activity	Revised arrangement in place for consideration of economic context of proposed developments and to permit conversion of s69 to s75 agreements in order to allow phasing of payments as a development is	Sustain via consideration of economic development implications of planning applications S69/S75 agreement requirements.

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				constructed in stages. Training session with elected members undertaken. New Planning regulations implemented.	
j) Review access to jobs locally and redundancy support services to ensure a continuing co-ordinated response to unemployment, including a PACE event in January for people recently affected by redundancy.	Community/Social Work /Corporate & Neighbourhood Services	March 2009	Improved access to advice services	<p>PACE event held Jan 09 280 participants</p> <p>Workforceplus partnership reviewing PACE requirements and further programmes of support.</p> <p>Workforceplus partnership action programme agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance client offer, • maximise available funding, • improve business engagement and • streamline referral etc. procedures <p>Futures Fairs held – Alexander Dennis, Carron Phoenix and</p>	Sustain via My Future's in Falkirk Business & Employment workstream and via Workforceplus Partnership

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				Sabic. Redundancy Fact-Pack produced by Social Work Services.	
k) Assisting local companies to access training advice and support, particularly to engage young people in pre-vocational and apprenticeship programmes;	Community/Education Services	2009-10	Training places secured	<p>Work underway involving FC and partners to:</p> <p>Roll out targeted training and employment from procurement of works and services</p> <p>Implement refreshed employer support measures involving Skillseekers and Apprenticeships</p> <p>Design and delivery of training interventions reviewed jointly with Forth Valley College to increase capacity of training options to meet the increased demand</p> <p>Support measures applied to help safeguard and sustain young people undertaking apprenticeships who are</p>	Sustain via My Futures in Falkirk Engaging Young People workstream, More Choices, More Chances Action Plan and Backing Falkirk's Future initiative.

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				<p>being made redundant.</p> <p>Refresh transitional employment and intermediate labour market programmes</p> <p>Future Jobs Fund award secured from Jobcentreplus, providing support for 90 places at a cost of £585k.</p> <p>Backing Falkirk's Futures launched 20th January.</p>	
l) Engage money advice and social services to assist in directing enquiries for increased support and assistance to meet local needs.	Community/Social Work /Corporate & Neighbourhood Services /CABs	March 2009	Improved access to advice services	<p>Worried about debt? - programme established and advice issued via website.</p> <p>Programme of community events taking place.</p> <p>Additional £150,000 of FSF allocated to CABx/homelessness service/Money Advice service to respond to increase in enquiries.</p>	Sustain via Social Work services, CABs.