

# Central urban transformation

Innovate Revitalise Transition **Transform** Sustain

*This area broadly covers central Scotland from the Glasgow city region and the Ayrshires in the west to Edinburgh city region in the east, including the Tay cities, the Forth Valley and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.*

We will only meet our climate change commitments if we make significant changes to the densely populated central belt of Scotland. Our most urban communities hold the key to reducing emissions from the way we live our lives. We need to work together to decarbonise buildings and transport and tackle congestion, make more efficient use of existing land and buildings, connect to renewable electricity and heat networks and create more inclusive, greener and sustainable places that will stand the test of time.

Many of our largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions are located in this area, including Grangemouth where industrial activity is concentrated, providing high value manufacturing, maintaining our resilience and providing employment. Other key sources include industrial, manufacturing and waste management sites and facilities. Overall emissions from domestic properties and transport are high as a result of the area's population density and the scale of daily movement within and between city regions. The growing risk of flooding could in the future have significant impacts, as many key settlements and economic assets are located on the Clyde, Forth and Tay estuaries.

Glasgow is Scotland's largest metropolitan area and Edinburgh is a world renowned historic capital city. There are differences between and within these city regions – at a broad scale there are relatively high concentrations of poor health, economic disadvantage and population decline in parts of the Glasgow city region contrasting with strong demand and expected population growth in parts of the Edinburgh city region. The area has a similar pattern of children living in poverty, with strong contrasts between the Glasgow and Edinburgh city regions. Household projections show there will be a continuing demand for more homes. There has been a strong market, high levels of housebuilding and pressure on infrastructure in some 'hot spots'

including the Edinburgh city region, Stirling and Falkirk, and Perth. In contrast, despite good connections and infrastructure capacity, it can be more challenging to encourage the market to deliver new homes towards the west of the central belt where unemployment is also higher.

There are also inequalities within each of the city regions, with local concentrations of economic deprivation. Overall, economic performance is higher in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow and lower in surrounding areas including Inverclyde, Ayrshire, along parts of the Clyde Coast and Lanarkshire. The diverse business base reflects nationally important sectors including financial services, business administration, life sciences, distribution and transport, retail and commercial, and manufacturing and production. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth and Stirling city centres are experiencing significant challenges, caused or accelerated by the pandemic, but each retain a strong character and distinctive identity, offering opportunities for new business, homes, and services. Similar issues apply to the towns across this area.

Beyond the cities and towns there are many high quality environments, from historic burghs and conservation areas to protected biodiversity sites, ancient woodlands and areas of high landscape quality, including the coastline, country and national parks, and canals. This



brings opportunities for outdoor recreation within a short distance of the majority of Scotland's population. We have made progress in restoring and reusing areas which were historically a focus for heavy industry and mining, and which left a legacy of disused sites and areas blighted by dereliction. The coast is an integral part of the area's identity, combining natural and cultural heritage and acting as a focus for investment and regeneration.

A coherent strategy that focuses on climate change and responds to the challenges of the pandemic will drive forward change to tackle inequalities and build a new, greener, future for this part of the country.

In this area we will:

- pioneer low-carbon, resilient urban living;
- reinvent and future-proof city centres;
- accelerate urban greening;
- rediscover urban coasts and waterfronts;
- reuse land and buildings;
- invest in net zero housing solutions;
- grow a wellbeing economy;
- reimagine development on the urban fringe; and
- improve urban accessibility.

# Central urban transformation

## Legend

-  Strategic maritime routes
-  Strategic connection
-  Blue economy

## Liveable places

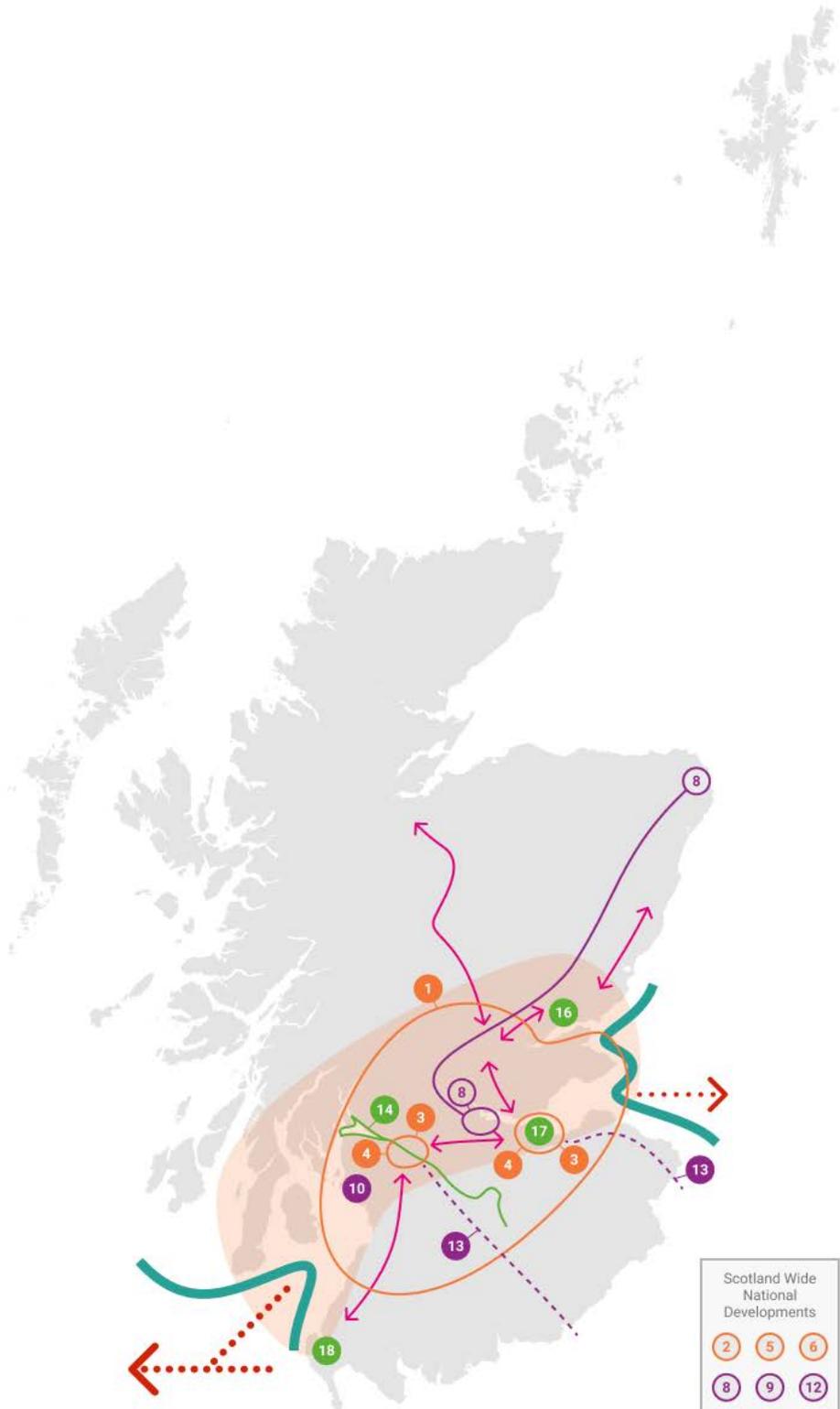
-  Central Scotland Green Network
-  National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
-  Urban Mass / Rapid Transit Networks  
Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow
-  Urban Sustainable, Blue and Green Drainage Solutions  
Edinburgh and Glasgow
-  Circular Economy Material Management Facilities
-  Digital Fibre Network

## Productive places

-  Industrial Green Transition Zones
-  Pumped Hydro Storage
-  Hunterston Strategic Asset
-  Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
-  High Speed Rail

## Distinctive places

-  Clyde Mission
-  Dundee Waterfront
-  Edinburgh Waterfront
-  Stranraer Gateway



## Actions

### 13. Pioneer low-carbon, resilient urban living

This area will require concerted effort to develop a network of 20 minute neighbourhoods, and clusters of communities with fair access to a range of services that support sustainable living. Planning should focus on revitalising cities and towns at scale, supporting a finer grained approach to placemaking, and a more intricate mix of land uses and density. This should incorporate networks of natural spaces and blue and green infrastructure, to create health and wellbeing benefits, increase resilience to climate change and support the growth of green job opportunities.

The car-based design of some of our places, including many suburban areas and new towns, mean that a significant shift to a more people centred approach will be required. Planning can help retrofit facilities and services into areas where they are scarce, such as predominantly residential areas, to enable better integrated mixed use areas. City, town and neighbourhood centres can be at the heart of this if they are planned to strengthen self-sufficiency and bring services and jobs closer to homes. The recommendations of the recent town centre review can be delivered by supporting a wider range of uses and making the most of their assets.

Accessibility will be a key part of the transition and will involve investment in infrastructure and services in line with the sustainable travel and investment hierarchies, to improve fair access and reduce carbon emissions. Active travel networks will need to expand to make walking, wheeling and cycling an attractive, convenient, safe, and sustainable choice for everyday travel. There are significant opportunities for investment in heat networks, energy storage and the circular economy to create more sustainable neighbourhoods.

As a nation we have a particular obligation to do more to tackle the concentration of poor health outcomes in west central Scotland. Action is needed to reduce inequality and improve health and wellbeing so that everyone

is able to thrive. Better places can do more to support lifelong health and wellbeing by providing more affordable, warmer homes that are connected to services. Access to quality greenspace and nature-based solutions can help to mitigate health inequalities and improve physical and mental health, by providing opportunities for play, socialising, relaxation and physical activity. We also need to reduce urban car use to help tackle emissions and air pollution. Local and affordable access to health and social care facilities will need to be built into our future places and can benefit from continuing investment in digital infrastructure and innovation.

### 14. Reinvent and future proof city centres

Scotland's city centres are socially and culturally important, supporting our productivity and stimulating innovation and investment. The pandemic has generated severe impacts and longer-term challenges for our city centres. The City Centre Recovery Taskforce is developing a shared vision for their future and the City Centre Recovery Fund will support their recovery and repurposing. This is a nationally significant opportunity to contribute to Scotland's economic recovery and to achieve a wellbeing economy.

The Glasgow city region is reimagining its future to build in climate resilience, develop a wellbeing economy, improve health and wellbeing and support environmental regeneration. The city centre, an exceptional asset and a primary location and cultural destination, has been significantly impacted by unprecedented changes in working patterns, service provision and the retail sector. Whilst these changes may not be sustained in the long term, now is the time to accelerate work to diversify the city centre and invest in maintaining and re-using existing buildings so that it can evolve to be a more carbon conscious place. Existing connections mean the centre could sustain many more homes, revitalising places and creating a 24 hour city that is safe and open to everyone. Significant investment in schools, community services and greenspace will be needed to achieve this and more creative use of the public realm and a low emission zone will help to make this a safer and healthier environment for

people of all ages. Innovative solutions, such as retrofitting energy efficiency measures to social housing across the city, could be extended to help improve the built fabric of the city centre's commercial properties.

Edinburgh has similar challenges and opportunities for positive change. High interest in investment and associated demand for new homes means that planning will need to help deliver sustainable development that supports the quality of life of existing and future residents. As a capital city with a World Heritage Site at its core, it will be crucial that future development takes into account the capacity of the city itself and its surrounding communities and makes the most of its exceptional heritage assets, places and cultural wealth. The City Centre Transformation Plan supports a move away from a car-based city centre to create a more liveable and attractive place to live, work and visit. The Forth Bridge is also an inscribed UNESCO World Heritage Site, and our rich industrial and cultural heritage remains apparent across the area.

Dundee is well on the way towards reinventing itself through regeneration of the waterfront, unlocking strategic sites for new homes and new opportunities for innovation and economic development arising such as the Eden Project, the Michelin Scotland Innovation Park and at the port. Continued regeneration in this area, building on the city's rich culture, sense of place and appetite to innovate will also contribute to the overall aims for this part of Scotland. The V&A will continue to be a focal point for this, evolving to become a National Centre for Design within this UNESCO City of Design. Perth is managing housing development in strategic development areas and transport infrastructure investment and the creation of a bus and rail interchange to support modal shift and establish a new gateway to the city. Stirling is bringing forward new opportunities for innovation and investment, building on the city's strong heritage and supported by the area's educational institutions.

## **15. Accelerate urban greening**

The greening of the built environment, including former industrial areas, is a long-held ambition that we now need to expedite to significantly reduce emissions, adapt to the future impacts of climate change and tackle biodiversity loss. Investment in green infrastructure will support urban sustainability, help to restore biodiversity, contribute to our overall targets for reducing emissions and improve health and wellbeing. By weaving blue and green infrastructure across our urban fabric we can ensure that nature and the outdoors are accessible to everyone, supporting lifelong health and wellbeing and creating places that are more resilient to flooding.

There is much that we have already learned from past work, for example initiatives to naturalise former mining features, reclaiming canals as a cultural heritage and natural asset, and extensive woodland creation. Wider woodland expansion across more urban areas could make a significant contribution to improving air quality and quality of life by reducing pollution, managing water and cooling urban environments. Blue and green networks can help to deliver compact and liveable cities.

Many initiatives will come together to achieve urban greening:

- The Central Scotland Green Network will continue to bring together environmental enhancement projects. Initiatives such as the John Muir Pollinator Way demonstrate how nature networks can help restore and better connect biodiversity and enhance green infrastructure at a landscape scale.
- The Glasgow City Region Green Network, a long-term transformational programme of environmental action, can achieve a step change in the quality and benefits of green places across west central Scotland and bring enhanced biodiversity closer to communities. As part of this, the Clyde Climate Forest is proposing natural solutions at scale across the Glasgow city region.
- The Inner Forth Futures Partnership is tackling the effects of climate change and providing recreation benefits through projects such as peatland restoration and woodland expansion.

- The River Leven Project in Fife is a holistic place based approach to development. Blue and green infrastructure will support investment and provide environmental, health and wellbeing benefits for communities.
- The Tayside strategic green and active travel network also aims to create regionally significant assets that contribute to the quality of the area.
- There is a particular opportunity to build on the successful regeneration of our canals to provide an invaluable strategic greenspace that connects communities across the area as a whole, contributes to its strong post-industrial heritage and provides wider functions such as water management to support future resilience to climate change. The potential of a canal asset should be recognised as a shared priority.

## **16. Rediscover urban coasts and waterfronts**

The region's coasts and firths define the area's history and shapes its sense of place. There is potential to unlock the strategic importance of coasts, estuary and river corridors for climate mitigation, resilience and positive environmental change. Coastal change will need to be managed to build long term resilience and future-proof our waterfronts. Progress has been made to create long-distance walking and cycling routes and to open up access to waterfront spaces and reclaim them as a resource for people as well as industry. There will be a need to tackle coastal erosion, flood risk and storm surges, and to build in natural solutions which work with the unique biodiversity and landscape character of these important places.

These coasts are rich in cultural and natural heritage. Along the Inner Forth various projects provide multiple benefits, including flood management, cultural landscape enhancement, habitat creation, access and tourism. Edinburgh's waterfront regeneration is ongoing with Granton benefiting from an ambitious masterplan, the tram extension to Leith progressing and potential development at Seafield helping to redefine the city's relationship with its coastline, reusing existing assets and helping Edinburgh to become a more liveable

city. A masterplanned approach to regenerating the Edinburgh Waterfront can take into account opportunities for the Port of Leith to service the offshore energy sector.

The successful regeneration of Dundee Waterfront has demonstrated the potential to make sustainable use of our urban coasts, and ongoing proposals include the creation of a marina at Victoria Dock and further development of central waterfront sites.

A national collaboration to support the Clyde Mission also has significant potential to accelerate change, attract investment and achieve wider benefits for communities. This ambitious project will reuse extensive areas of vacant and derelict land in accessible locations. The wider Clyde Coast, an iconic area rich in cultural heritage and natural assets, can be reimaged through collective efforts on regeneration in coastal communities such as Dunoon and Rothesay. The area's accessibility by train and water means that it is an ideal location for low-carbon tourism and leisure.

Key ports in this area can play a central role in supporting the expansion of renewable energy, in particular offshore wind energy. It will also be important to make use of the infrastructure to reduce road haulage and secure a more sustainable freight sector which directly links to international markets. There are opportunities for enhanced cruise facilities for the Forth as well as the Clyde where Greenock Ocean Terminal, supported by the Glasgow City Region Deal, can act as a key gateway. There may be opportunities to make use of harbour facilities to support the marine leisure industry.

As the highest single source of industrial emissions in Scotland, and a key part of our future resilience and manufacturing base, continued investment at Grangemouth, and the strategic sites it includes, will be required. Plans are emerging for innovative industry in the Falkirk/Grangemouth Investment Zone, building on the area's strengths in chemicals and making the most of strategic assets including the port and rail connection. There is great potential, not only to reduce emissions at the Grangemouth complex, but also to grow the cluster into a hub

of low-carbon manufacturing that can help unlock wider decarbonisation across the country, with its strategic location, infrastructure, assets and skills base. Opportunities include renewable energy innovation, bioenergy hydrogen production with carbon capture and storage, and repurposing of existing strategic and critical infrastructure such as pipelines. The skills, knowledge and experience that is currently situated there for the petrochemicals sector is a prime resource for the transition to net zero. This can form a focal point in a wider masterplan for Forth Valley that brings together opportunities for energy with the circular economy to support wider investment in green economic opportunities.

Hunterston is a strategic asset with deepwater access, where there are plans for new economic development and employment uses. Coastal sites formerly used for baseload power generation – specifically Longannet and Cockenzie – benefit from existing assets and infrastructure that can be repurposed to form the basis of new proposals. At Cockenzie work is ongoing to develop an opportunity for a Climate Evolution Zone to generate employment and provide essential infrastructure for net zero, linked with a new sustainable settlement at Greater Blindwells. There is scope to build on the strategic location and rail connectivity of Longannet to benefit local communities around this part of the Forth. There are further opportunities for a range of economic activities and investment in ports associated with a green economy at Montrose, Dundee, Rosyth, Burntisland, and Methil. The Levenmouth rail link will reconnect Leven to the mainline rail network with new stations at Leven and Cameron Bridge by 2024 subject to consenting processes. This will enhance the communities it serves and contribute positively to the lives of people who live there by unlocking access to social, cultural, employment and educational opportunity.

Development of ports on the east coast will also need to take account of the potential for a substantial increase in freight and passenger traffic between Scotland and continental Europe linked to the Scottish Government's objective that Scotland should accede to the European Union as an independent Member State at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **17. Reuse land and buildings**

A more liveable Central Belt means that we will need to do more to reuse empty buildings and vacant and derelict land, particularly spaces which have not been used for decades and can be accessed by sustainable modes. This will reduce further urban sprawl and improve local environments. Around 40% of Scotland's vacant and derelict land is concentrated in the Glasgow city region and its redevelopment is a key priority. Edinburgh has committed to building a significant share of future housing development on brownfield sites and progress is being made in Dundee to repurpose disused sites including the creation of a new innovation park on the former Michelin site.

A combination of incentives, investment and policy support for productively reusing brownfield land and buildings at risk will be required to steer development away from greenfield locations. Public sector-led development can shape future markets and deliver development in places where change is needed the most and can deliver multiple benefits. Redevelopment should include, but not be limited to, housing development. By de-risking sites and taking an infrastructure-first approach, this land can help to achieve a better distribution of new homes to meet our future needs. This will also reduce pressure in places where growth is no longer sustainable. Key projects include the Dundee Eden Project and redevelopment of Ravenscraig, a longstanding post-industrial site where new development can bring new models of low-carbon living at scale.

## **18. Invest in net zero housing solutions**

As well as building new homes to net zero standards, more will need to be done to upgrade the existing housing stock to reduce emissions and adapt to future climate impacts. Energy efficiency, sustainable accessibility, zero emissions heating solutions and water management will be key challenges. Areas which are largely residential and car-based could be diversified by supporting local businesses to provide services including leisure, active living, hospitality and retail.

There is a particular pressure for affordable housing solutions in the south east of Scotland and there is also an opportunity for future housing development to help reduce emissions. Edinburgh has committed to building affordable homes at scale, and will need to work with the region to accommodate wider need and demand in a strategic way. Seven strategic sites, supported through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, could accommodate up to 45,000 homes and associated economic and employment benefits including: Blindwells, Calderwood, Dunfermline, Edinburgh Waterfront, Shawfair, Tweedbank and Winchburgh. The need for proposals to be supported by low carbon transport solutions, in line with the Infrastructure Investment Plan and National Transport Strategy investment hierarchies and infrastructure first approach, will be critical to their success. The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal identifies infrastructure investment and includes a commitment from partners to put in place a regional developer contributions framework building on work undertaken to look at cross boundary transport challenges. These interventions and commitments, taken with the additional transport investment made through the Deal, will ensure the city region continues to grow and flourish. Regionally significant services including healthcare and social care facilities and investment in the learning estate is also planned to support future growth and sustain the wellbeing of existing, new and expanding communities.

Emissions from our homes need to be very substantially reduced – by 2030, they must fall by 68% from 2020 levels. There are opportunities to address the impact of climate change on communities whilst also generating renewable heat and facilitating urban cooling from our rivers. Mine water, solar and onshore support for offshore renewables, including development that makes use of existing infrastructure at strategic hubs, all provide opportunities for decarbonisation.

There is a continuing need to invest in renewing and improving the capacity of flooding, water and drainage infrastructure to build the resilience of communities. A catchment-scale approach, using nature-based solutions, can also provide benefits for the health and quality of life of Scotland's urban communities particularly where solutions seek to deliver multiple benefits, including biodiversity gain and active travel routes. This approach can also be more cost-effective than hard engineering solutions and create lasting jobs. For example, the Glasgow city region recognises the challenges for future adaptation and is identifying sustainable solutions to sea level rise, urban overheating, and water management.

Engineered solutions to adapt our water and drainage infrastructure will be required in some circumstances, but should support more natural benefits as far as possible. There is scope to continue, and extend, the lessons from the Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Plan to future proof infrastructure in support of the long term growth and development of Edinburgh. The Lothian Drainage Partnership is taking this forward with projects emerging within Edinburgh and at the ClimatEvolution Zone in East Lothian. At a local scale there is significant potential to expand raingardens and sustainable urban drainage systems to help manage surface water as part of blue and green infrastructure for our future cities and towns.

### **19. Grow a wellbeing economy**

This area has a diverse business base and is a key engine of growth for Scotland as a whole. There are many clusters of sites and businesses which form the basis of regional propositions for investment. In line with our aspirations to build a wellbeing economy, opportunities for investment and development should be designed to maximise economic, social and environmental wellbeing, rather than focusing on growth alone. A planned approach can help to target future development in areas of significant economic disadvantage so that new and better jobs are more fairly distributed to help address national, regional and more localised inequality.

The pandemic has brought obvious challenges but has also unlocked opportunities to take forward new models of working that could better support our wellbeing and improve our places in the longer term. The continued growth of remote and local working and the creation of hubs within groups of settlements could significantly reduce the need to travel, whilst also helping to grow local businesses and communities. Existing offices have the potential to be repurposed to achieve higher density mixed use neighbourhoods with a lower carbon footprint and require careful planning to ensure future communities are properly supported by appropriate services.

Many business and investment sites are located along key transport corridors and new approaches may be required as investment transitions away from locations that can only be reached by car towards more accessible areas that are connected by low-carbon and active travel options.

A number of clear investment propositions are supported:

- The Clyde Mission will stimulate investment in sites along the Clyde to build a wellbeing economy and achieve a step-change in the quality of the environment for communities. Key sites extend from Greenock Ocean Terminal to Queens Quay, Tradeston, the Broomielaw and Glasgow City Centre, to Clyde Gateway – a longstanding regeneration project which has made exceptional progress in transforming communities and overcoming inequality.
- Aligning with the Clyde Mission, the Ayrshire Councils are working together through their Ayrshire Growth Deal and Community Wealth Building programme to build economic resilience and address unemployment, poverty and inequality across their area, with town centres at the heart of communities. This includes proposals for advanced manufacturing and aerospace engineering which will make use of the existing infrastructure and investment opportunities available at Glasgow and Prestwick airports. Glasgow is already a centre of expertise for

manufacturing satellites and will benefit from the associated development of a network of spaceports across the country, whilst supporting wider industry and employment. The Ardeer peninsula is also a significant site for redevelopment of the wider Ayrshire area.

- The Edinburgh City region supports investment in significant clusters including the Bioquarter, Mid Fife, Dunfermline, Guardbridge St. Andrews, Galashiels, Cockenzie, Midlothian and the M8 corridor. A strategy for West Edinburgh is emerging which guides a wide range of uses to create a sustainable extension to the city, with added benefit from associated improvements to the quality of place of existing communities. Proposals focus on locating development on and around existing transport corridors and work is ongoing to improve accessibility including the Edinburgh tram extension. Further investment should take into account the impact of new development on potentially compounding existing capacity constraints and congestion, and prioritise sustainable choices.
- The Tay Cities Region has a strong regional proposal for developing clusters of investment in research and innovation supporting a range of sectors in both urban and rural areas including life sciences, energy, digital, and food production.

A wellbeing economy goes beyond strategic investment sites to link more closely with the wellbeing of communities and their local environments. It will be critical to recognise the importance of anchor institutions who can support local investment in our places and natural and historic assets, provide education, employment and other services, and act as community hubs. Communities can drive forward community-led housing initiatives to help meet the needs of local people. Significant investment in our health and social care, justice and learning estates will continue to provide important sources of employment and income for smaller scale local businesses. Town centres throughout this area will also play a critical role in driving a new economic future. The recent town centre review highlights opportunities to

expand the range of services and facilities they offer, reuse redundant buildings and provide new homes for a wide range of people. This in turn will ensure their crucial role in defining our sense of place is protected and enhanced, future-proofing a key asset for Scotland as a whole.

## **20. Reimagine development on the urban fringe**

Whilst predominantly urban, this part of Scotland benefits from a rich and diverse rural area and there are many areas where town meets countryside. These green areas and natural spaces are key assets, sustaining communities that could become better places to live if we can achieve this in a way that is compatible with our wider aims for climate change, nature restoration and 20 minute neighbourhoods. The pandemic has demonstrated that many people are looking for more space at home and in their communities. It will be important to plan positively and imaginatively to make sustainable use of the countryside around our cities and towns.

These areas have important functions – providing vital ecosystem services and spaces for local food growing, outdoor access and recreation. They support carbon sequestration, including through peatland restoration, woodland creation and conserving natural habitats and there is scope for innovation in key sectors including sustainable food production. Digital connectivity is key to realising the potential for smaller-scale rural development more widely, for example in Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire. We can make use of the area's assets to grow tourism and leisure close to where people live. Within Forth Valley a National Tartan Centre, the Canal corridor, the Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Antonine Wall World Heritage Site, Ochil Hills and Whisky Trail create a unique heritage offering which will support local employment and strengthen the area's sense of place. Tourism is a key theme in the emerging regional economic strategy for the Forth Valley and both the Falkirk Growth Deal and Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal.

There are landscape-scale opportunities within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park to restore and enhance nature and respond to climate change, including through woodland creation and peatland restoration, as well as natural flood risk management. The National Park will continue to support the quality of life and health of the urban population and its future priorities include new infrastructure provision to provide a quality visitor experience and support people to connect with nature, as well as a greener tourism sector supported by innovative low carbon transport solutions. Long-distance active travel and rail routes have untapped potential to provide sustainable tourism solutions. The area's communities can adapt to support more localised living and working opportunities, with improved digital connectivity and affordable housing. More integrated planning and land management offers opportunities to support land use change and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The approach also links with and relates to the action area to the north.

## **21. Improve urban accessibility**

A focus on community wealth building, together with growing opportunities for longer term remote working, could address the high levels of transport movement by private car and challenges of congestion and air pollution across the area. Local living, including 20 minute neighbourhoods, will help to minimise future commuting and ensure jobs and income can be spread more evenly across the area. Accessibility and transport affordability can support more resilience which benefits communities who are less connected.

By putting in place mass transit systems for Edinburgh through plans to extend the tram network, and for Glasgow including the Glasgow Metro and multi-modal connectivity, we have an opportunity to substantially reduce levels of car-based commuting, congestion and emissions from transport at scale.

Connections to the rest of the UK will be strengthened in the longer term through high speed rail connectivity, with stations expected in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Decarbonisation of freight will require the construction of new hubs and associated facilities to support logistics. This will also support growing interest in express logistics from rail operators that would see passenger Electrical Multiple Units converted to carry small freight, targeting the UK parcel market. Ports on the Clyde, Forth and Tay coasts will also play a key role in this transition.

Digital connectivity will facilitate remote working, supporting the growth of towns and villages outwith the larger cities and potentially leading to a renaissance in more rural living. It will be crucial to address digital inequality, whether through cost, infrastructure or skills development, as virtual service provision continues to grow.

**Q14: Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?**

**Q15: What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?**