

Thriving
Sustainable
Inclusive
East Lothian

SUMMARY
**EAST LoTHIAN
LOCAL ECONOMY
STRATEGY**
2024-34



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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the East Lothian Local Economy Strategy 2024–2034. This is a hugely important document which sets out the vision and objectives that East Lothian Council and its partners will work towards achieving over the next decade. Key to the strategy is a focus on ensuring East Lothian continues to be a sustainable and thriving county, with fairness, partnerships, and the development of community wealth at its heart.

Building on the Council's values of **Enabling, Leading, and Caring**, it also supports the *East Lothian Council Plan 2022–2027*, which continues the journey towards realising our vision for an even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy, that enables our people and communities to flourish.

In taking forward the new strategy, there is a very strong basis on which we can build. During the 2012–22 strategy period, East Lothian – one of Scotland's fastest growing areas – saw a number of successes, developments and milestones such as achieving the business growth target.

The former Cockenzie Power Station site was acquired by East Lothian Council to support ambitions to promote economic growth and create employment opportunities. Excellent progress continues to be made with the Edinburgh Innovation HUB; a joint venture between East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University (QMU), supported through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, which will be a nationally significant centre for innovation driven business growth and the creation of high value employment. There is also the ongoing development of the new settlement at Blindwells, which we believe provides significant opportunities for affordable housing, economic development, inward investment and job creation, and to help enable a just transition to net zero carbon places.

A number of changes and challenges have also been encountered during this period, such as the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our ongoing collective efforts to respond to the Climate and Nature Emergencies, and the emergence of new digital technologies. Our collective response to this demonstrates the resilience of East Lothian as a county, the strength of our business base as well as our collective agility and responsiveness.

All of this means it is now an appropriate time to revisit our approach to the strategic development

of East Lothian's economy. The principles of Community Wealth Building, Net Zero, sustainability, fairness and working in partnership run as a thread throughout the document.

The strategy is being launched at a time when resources in local government are increasingly constrained. This underlines the importance of embracing new and innovative delivery models, as well as the requirement for partnering and support from central governments and stakeholders in ensuring that this strategy is a success.

Whilst East Lothian Council will play an active role in overseeing delivery of the strategy through an Enabling, Leading, Caring values-driven approach it is important to emphasise the key role that partnership working has to play in achieving our shared objectives. Together we can make a difference.

The next 10 years is set to be another period of change. East Lothian is very well positioned to be at the forefront of the clean energy transition, whilst capitalising on the strength of our visitor economy with a focus on sustainable tourism and our renowned food and drink sector offer. This strategy will ensure we, together with our partners and the business community, can grasp and maximise the opportunities which lie ahead.

Monica Patterson John McMillan



EAST LOTHIAN IS LOCATED ON THE EAST COAST OF SCOTLAND NEXT TO THE CAPITAL CITY, EDINBURGH.

OUR VIBRANT ECONOMY IS A MIX OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION, WITH A BLEND OF AGRICULTURE, ENERGY, FOOD & DRINK, MANUFACTURING AND TOURISM.



About East Lothian



Population

112,300 in 2022 which is rapidly growing, 25% higher than at the turn of the century. A rise of 14.3% predicted 2018–2043.



Location

Accessible by major road, rail and air routes.



Business Base

Largely micro and SMEs. **98.4%** employ less than 49 people.



Educated Workforce

More residents have qualifications than the City Region, Scotland and Great Britain.



Landscape

Over 40 miles of stunning coastline leads to gently rolling hills and scenic countryside.



Employment

Growth outperformed the Scottish average in most sectors driven largely by population growth. **76% employment rate.**



Productivity

GVA per worker grew by 23% between 2011 and 2021.



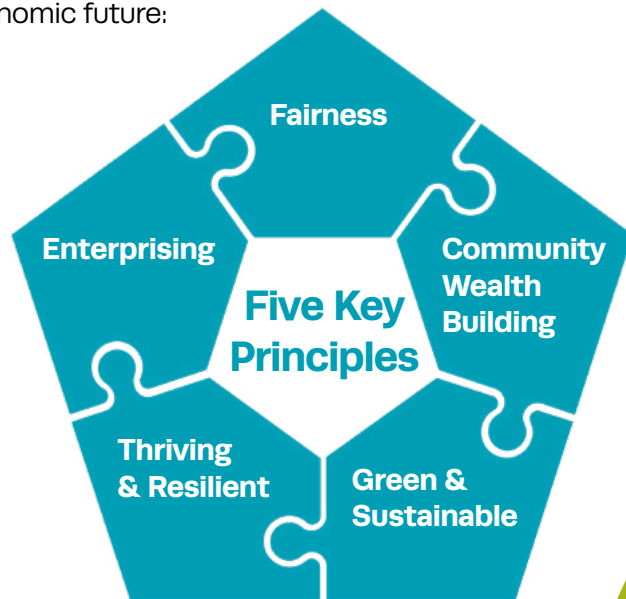
Visitor Destination

Attracted 1.22m visitors in 2022 and the visitor economy accounts for 15% of the workforce.

About our strategy

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, THRIVING PLACE WITH FAIRNESS AND COMMUNITY WEALTH AT ITS HEART.

The East Lothian Local Economy Strategy is a ten-year plan built around **Five Key Principles** that the council and its partners consider fundamental to the area's economic future:



We will work together on this shared vision, objectives, actions and performance measures to ensure East Lothian continues to be a sustainable and thriving place with fairness and the development of community wealth at its heart.

Socio-Economic

Undertaking a desk-based review of socio-economic data, including a review of data on demographics; economy, employment, and business; labour market characteristics; connectivity; housing and employment land; and the visitor economy.

Stakeholder & Community

Engagement through community consultations; business stakeholder workshops and feedback sessions; ongoing engagement with the East Lothian Connected Economy Group; one-to-one discussions with key stakeholders and Council officials; sessions with Councillors, and participation at economic development events in East Lothian.

Community Wealth Building

An audit of East Lothian's current approach to Community Wealth Building (CWB), based around the Scottish Government's 'five-pillars' approach, and the development of a CWB Action Plan and Charter, which supplements and complements this strategy.

Strategic

A review of the key national, regional, and local strategic documents that influence East Lothian's approach to developing the local economy. The research and consultations were across 2023 and into early 2024.

Our Strengths & Opportunities

**A UNIQUE LOCATION RENOWNED FOR NATURAL BEAUTY,
ENTHUSIASTIC COMMUNITIES AND UNRIVALLED OPPORTUNITIES.**

*Nationally & regionally important
strategic development sites*

*Natural resources
& infrastructure*

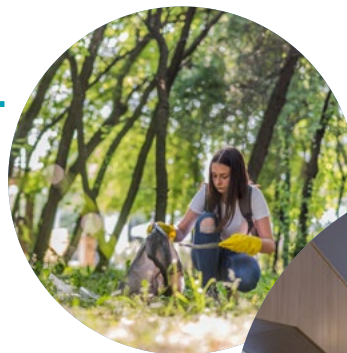
*High quality east-west
transport links*

*Active and engaged private
and third sector*

*Rapidly growing and well
educated population*

Excellent food & drink offer

*Attractive visitor
destinations*



Our Approach

THE FOCUS OF OUR STRATEGY IS...

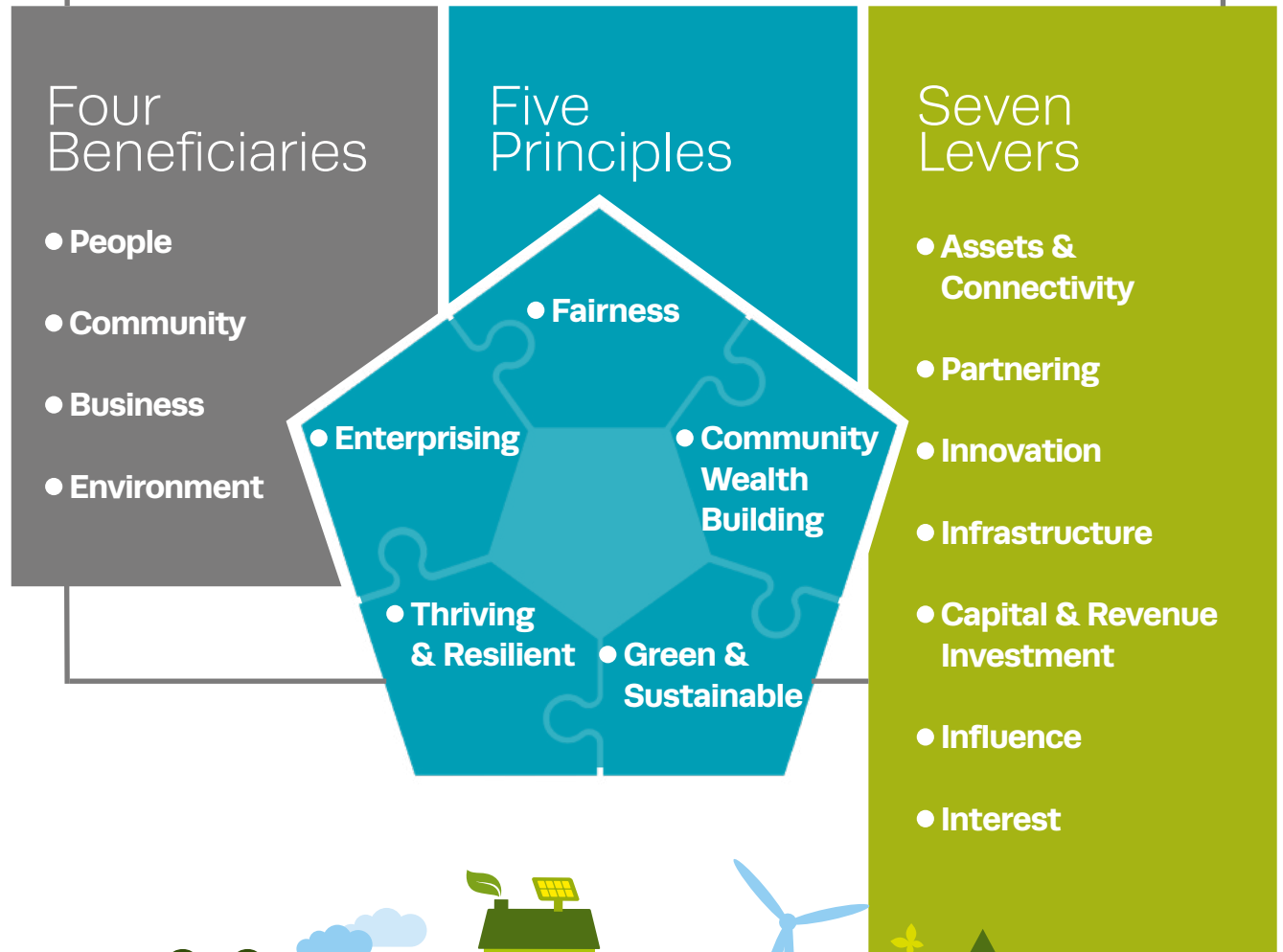
To provide all East Lothian's people, communities, businesses, and its environment (defined here as **Four Beneficiaries**) the support they need to reach their potential and achieve their goals.



It will do this in a manner that is fair, develops community wealth, supports a just transition to a green and sustainable economy that is enterprising, thriving and resilient, providing access to opportunities for all East Lothian residents (our **Five Principles**).



To achieve this, the Council and its partners will seek to make best use of, and further develop the area's assets and connectivity links to build effective partnerships; foster innovation; invest its resources appropriately; utilise its influence with other economic partners; and generate interest (**Seven Levers**).



Our Vision

IN 2034, EAST LoTHIAN WILL BE AN INCREASINGLY THRIVING, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY.

We will adopt a joined-up approach to economic development, with all local economy stakeholders working together to give East Lothian's people, communities, and enterprises the support they need to reach their potential and achieve their goals.

East Lothian will be recognised nationally and internationally as a great place to live, work, visit, learn, and invest and as a leading partner in delivering regional prosperity, community wealth, and driving forward Scotland's just transition to a Net Zero economy.

Our Goals

THREE STRATEGIC GOALS TO SUPPORT OUR VISION

Goal 1

Increase number of businesses with growth and employment potential.

Measure

Total number of businesses, number of businesses with > 50 employees, number of businesses with > 250 employees.

Goal 2

Reduce income inequality and improve access to employment in rural areas.

Measure

Difference between average residential-based earning and workplace-based earning and the percentage of East Lothian datazones that lie in the most deprived quintile of Scottish datazones on the SIMD.

Goal 3

Increase the number of socially and environmentally responsible businesses in East Lothian, expand plural ownership of the economy, and grow community wealth.

Measure

The number of public, private, and third sector organisations who have signed up to the East Lothian Community Wealth Building Charter.

Our Objectives

1



To be the destination of choice for innovative, socially, and environmentally responsible businesses to set up, grow, and succeed.

Increase the business base. Target socially and environmentally responsible businesses, and those who will employ local people and develop local supply chains. Allocation, supply, or development of land for commercial / employment activity by East Lothian Council. Land in the west at Queen Margaret University, Cockenzie, and Blindwells will continue to be key to delivery of this objective. Commercial developments must be facilitated in and around the County's towns and villages to ensure rural East Lothian is not left behind. A pro-business approach to Planning will be taken to maximise the benefits of opportunities, especially where land is zoned or can be deemed suitable for economic use.

2



To provide high quality opportunities for people to learn, develop skills, and grow their potential.

The OECD predicts that as many as six in ten workers will require retraining before 2027. Technology and digitisation will continue to drive changes in the way people work, resulting in analytical and creative thinking being identified as the most important skills for workers in the coming years. There are significant opportunities for East Lothian to grow its economy, prosperity, and position in the City Region through innovation, data sciences, clean and renewable energy, construction and infrastructure, tourism, food and drink, health and social care, childcare, and agriculture. East Lothian Council and its partners will focus on providing relevant high-quality opportunities for learning, upskilling, and reskilling.

3



To build on East Lothian's reputation as a great place to live, work, and learn by adopting a pro-business approach, seeking and supporting sustainable investment, and by empowering communities.

Heritage, culture, and nature are key attributes for East Lothian along with the distinctiveness of its towns and villages, each having its own identity. This is an attractor for residents, visitors, and businesses, contributing to East Lothian's reputation and excellent quality of life. Retail trends continue to shift, but there are new opportunities for high-quality local offerings, especially linked to food, drink, and experiences, as well as more social and cultural functions in town and village centres. Sense of place is a key attribute and one which can be developed and marketed to increase economic growth and resilience. The rural economy can require specific support and faces challenges that include availability of public transport, digital connectivity,

and fewer opportunities to develop commercial space for new and growing businesses. Policy interventions such as *20-Minute Neighbourhoods* will be interpreted in a rural context in East Lothian but provide an opportunity to further enhance the experience of living and working in the area. East Lothian Council will adopt a pro-business approach to encourage investment that can address these challenges and deliver on opportunities, and ensure communities are empowered.



4



To capitalise on the economic opportunities of and take a leading role in a just transition to a net zero economy.

5



To maximise the opportunities of being a part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region.

6



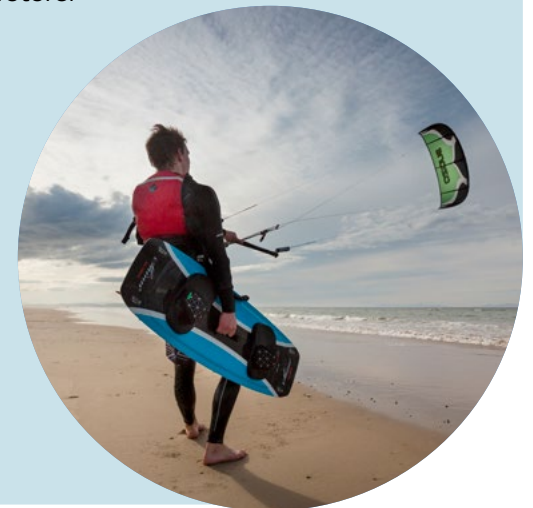
To promote a successful, accessible, and sustainable tourism sector that provides quality experiences and benefits our local communities.

Facilitating a just transition towards a net-zero economy is crucial for addressing the climate and ecological emergency. East Lothian is well placed to capitalise on this transition through job creation, business creation and growth, increased investment, cost savings, and building resilience. The transition to clean energy, natural capital and regenerative agriculture, and high-quality local food and drink are key areas of opportunity. The area is uniquely placed to take advantage of significant amounts of renewable energy production, opportunities for the development and delivery of clean heat to homes and businesses, and opportunities linked to hydrogen production, decarbonising of industrial processes, nuclear decommissioning, and improvements in agricultural productivity and diversification.

The *Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal* is expected to deliver capital investment of £1.3bn across Research, Development and Innovation, Skills and Employability, Transport, Culture, and Housing. It has also facilitated the *Regional Prosperity Framework and Delivery Plan*, identified opportunities for funding collaboration, and developed a framework for Community Wealth Building. The county's strategic sites at the Edinburgh Innovation Hub and Park, Cockenzie, Blindwells, and Dunbar are key to delivering regional prosperity. East Lothian will continue to collaborate and contribute to regional working and the development of prospectuses, programmes, projects, and funding bids with a focus on benefit realisation and securing Community Wealth for East Lothian.

Tourism is a significant contributor to the East Lothian and Scottish economy. Edinburgh is the key national driver for higher spending overseas visitors and East Lothian will build on its proximity to the capital city by continuing to promote the destination as *Edinburgh's Coast & Countryside*. The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Visitor Economy & Culture Programme is set to deliver ambitious cross regional working to benefit the regional visitor economy. It will be the vehicle to inform, develop and deliver regional visitor economy projects, with the aim of becoming a world-class year-round destination, delivering a forward-looking responsible approach to tourism development.

This affords opportunities for East Lothian to contribute to and benefit from the key investment areas including DDI, cycling and culture. *Scotland Outlook 2030* is the national tourism strategy which aims to deliver responsible tourism for a sustainable future.



Contact us

Visit **www.investeastlothian.com**

Email **economicdevelopment@eastlothian.gov.uk**

Or call our Contact Centre on **01620 827 827**

All information correct at time of publishing: February 2025



Versions of our strategy can be provided in Braille, large print, audiotape, or your own language.

For assistance please call: **01620 827 827**

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via **www.contactscotland-bsl.org**