ESESCommunities.org

Celebrating **5 Years**





CITY REGION DEAL
Edinburgh & South East Scotland



ESESCommunities.org























Introduction



ESES Communities was launched 5 years ago, when we set out to unlock the full potential of Community Benefits across Edinburgh, the Lothians, Fife, and the Scottish Borders. We wanted to bridge the gap between local ambition and business support creating a space where community groups can find the resources they need to flourish, and suppliers can discover rewarding ways to make a real difference.

Funded by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal, under the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills (IRES) programme and run by our team at Capital City Partnership, our portal welcomes any regional businesses eager to get involved.

By creating the platform www.esescommunities.org, this enabled an opportunity to link communities, charities and local organisations in the area to make Community Benefit requests to businesses in the supply chain of City Deal projects. We have been delighted by the response of contractors and their supply chains, as well as other businesses looking to make a positive impact by giving back to their community.



Contents >>


10 Case Studies by Local Authority


03 Introduction

12 University of Edinburgh Partnership

07 Project Impact


13 Social Business Directory


08 Capital Builds

14 Community Wealth Building Focus

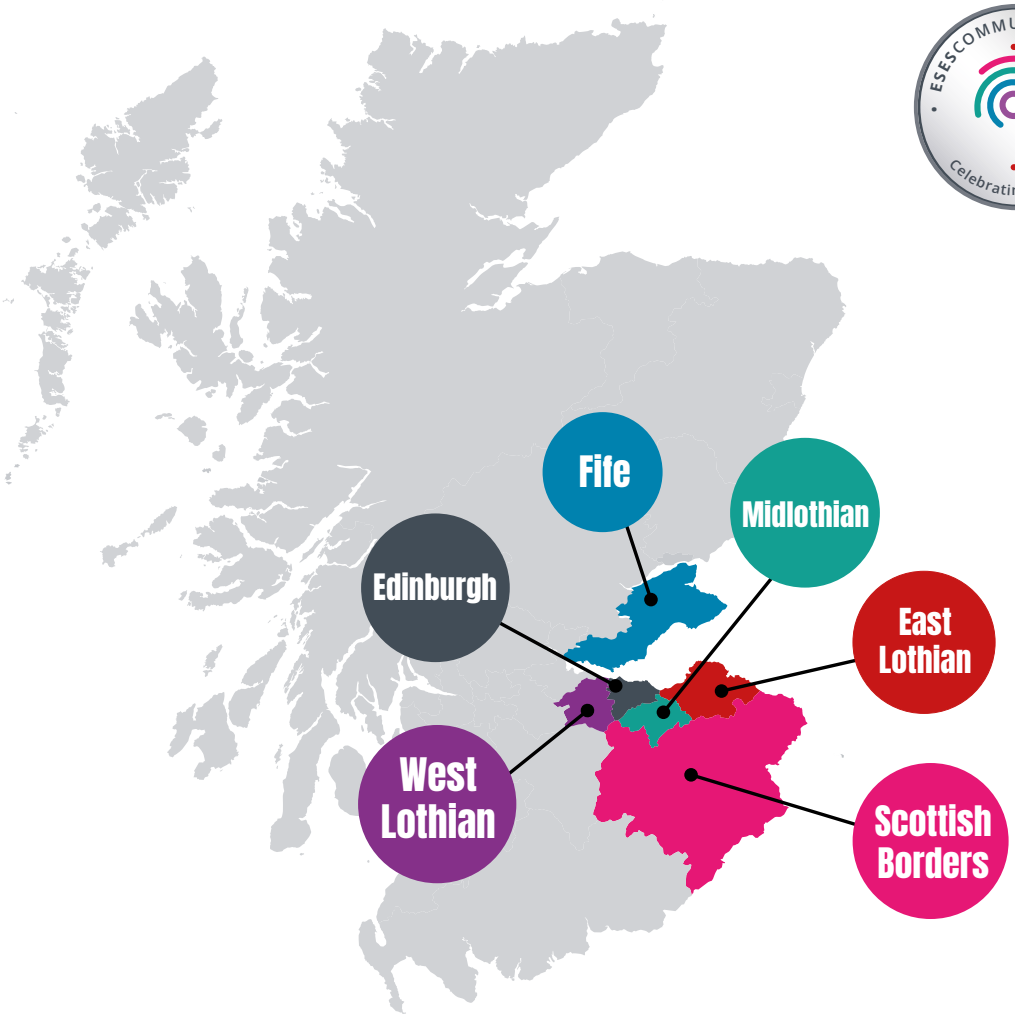


Councillor Norman Hampshire

Convener of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Partnership / Joint Committee and Leader of East Lothian Council

ESESCommunities has become a vital tool in delivering Community Wealth Building across our region. By connecting investment, procurement and local opportunity, it helps ensure the benefits of growth reach our people, businesses and communities.

Projects such as the Edinburgh Innovation Hub demonstrate how investment can deliver far more than new infrastructure, creating lasting opportunities and stronger local outcomes. As we look ahead, ESESCommunities will remain central to our ambitions for inclusive growth.





Andy Nichol

Head of Programme Management Office, Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal

ESESCommunities has helped turn our commitment to inclusive growth into meaningful action. By connecting contractors, suppliers and partners with opportunities to deliver social value, the platform ensures investment creates lasting benefits alongside physical development.

Its influence is now shaping how partners approach procurement and supply chain engagement, helping embed social value more consistently and creating greater opportunities for communities across the region.



Rona Hunter

Chief Executive, Capital City Partnership and Vice Chair, IRES Board

ESESCommunities demonstrates what can be achieved when organisations work together around a shared purpose.

By linking employers, suppliers and partners directly to community priorities, the platform makes it easier to turn good intentions into measurable impact.

Five years on, it continues to strengthen the connection between economic activity and social value, helping ensure investment delivers real benefits for the people and communities who need them most.

Project Impact

Since the launch of the portal in November 2021, we have engaged with communities and third sector organisations, suppliers and businesses across our region to help maximise social value.

By creating meaningful connections between major projects and local organisations, the platform has supported the delivery of employment, training, volunteering, community investment and supply chain opportunities, ensuring that the benefits of regional investment are shared more widely and contribute to stronger, more inclusive communities.



230 matches

facilitated between suppliers and community organisations and charities across Fife, Edinburgh, the Lothians and Scottish Borders.



£124,400+

has been delivered through community benefits across the six local authorities since the portal launched in November 2021.

Comprising of



£61,798

worth of 'Benefit in Kind' materials and labour costs etc.



£62,591

worth of donations & financial contributions made to community groups & charities.



27,000+

benefitting individuals across the ESES City Region area.



1,100 hours

of labour or volunteering hours donated.

Capital Builds

At the heart of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal is a commitment to inclusive growth, reduced inequality and community wealth building. We work to ensure that the region's major capital investments not only build new infrastructure, but they also build stronger communities and leave a lasting, positive legacy.

Our platform harnesses the investment of the City Region Deal to connect contractors, suppliers, and businesses delivering major projects across South East Scotland with local residents, charities, and social enterprises. By unlocking economic opportunities and encouraging collaboration, it helps ensure that capital investment generates lasting social, economic, and environmental benefits for local communities.

Deal projects come with built-in community benefit obligations and we are taking that strong foundation and further embedding community wealth as standard practice from construction and launch through to operation and legacy.

ESES Communities gives major construction and infrastructure projects a practical framework to deliver and track social value right alongside the physical build. Whether through local jobs, apprenticeships, skills training, school outreach, or supporting local businesses and contributing to environmental improvements, the platform helps contractors match their commitments to what local communities actually need, ensuring the Deal's impact reaches far beyond the physical asset itself.

Recent completed projects

Borders Innovation Park (Phase 2)

The latest project to be completed is Phase 2 of Borders Innovation Park, which is a high-quality commercial office development built to mirror and expand upon the success of the fully occupied Phase 1 building. Developed and funded by Scottish Borders Council, the project also benefits from funding through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal.

Morrison Construction completed the build in July 2026. During the short development they were able to support **20 new entrant** positions, offer **180 weeks of training opportunities** and **£10,000 of financial contributions** or materials benefitting local groups.





Edinburgh Innovation Hub (EIH)

This joint venture between East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University (QMU) was delivered by Heron Bros. They were keen to align with local priorities and community wealth by strengthening local supply chains and utilising local suppliers and contractors during the build.

Heron Bros also had a keen focus on encouraging the next generation for the construction sector with upskilling and employability support.



They supported various third sector organisations with donations of materials and labour including the fantastic refurbishment project for Archaeology Scotland. The project breathed new life into a tired portakabin changing room, donated to Archaeology Scotland, converting it into an outdoor learning centre that will serve young learners for years to come.

This project delivered:

- **£25,000+ contributions to regional good causes**
- **20 apprentices/trainees employed**
- **4 graduate placements**
- **26 weeks of work placements**

Usher Building

The building houses The University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute in Edinburgh's BioQuarter, and focuses on connecting partners to innovate in data-driven health.

As part of the SCAPE framework, contractor McLaughlin & Harvey ensured that they positively impacted on the local area with **40% of their local workforce residing within 20 miles** of the build and **56% of local spend occurred within the same area**.



With a strong community focus and as part of their 'Your Communities Matter' campaign, McLaughlin & Harvey worked with us to identify local causes and **funded 33 microgrants** for community organisations to help support their projects, which directly impacted over **1,100 individuals** in the region.

Case Studies by Local Authority

Over the past 5 years we have worked with suppliers and beneficiaries across our region to maximise opportunities for support. Whether it be upskilling, offering professional support, materials or financial contributions, these have all played a part in positively impacting over **27,000 individuals**.

Further examples of completed community matches delivered throughout Edinburgh, Fife, the Lothians and Scottish Borders can be found on the case study section of our website. https://www.esescommunities.org/recent-case-studies.html

East Lothian

In-Tandem East Lothian is an inclusive cycling club that enables people with disabilities to enjoy the physical and social benefits of tandem cycling. Support from **GRAHAM Group**, facilitated through ESES Communities, provided essential equipment to help the charity expand its activities, reducing isolation and improving wellbeing, confidence and inclusion for participants across East Lothian.

Edinburgh

The first Scottish project delivered by **Volunteer It Yourself** (VIY) transformed indoor and outdoor spaces at Royston Wardieburn Community Centre in North Edinburgh, creating a more welcoming and functional environment for local residents.

Through improvements including a revitalised courtyard, new seating, growing spaces and upgraded facilities, the project enhanced community wellbeing, supported the delivery of vital local services, and provided young people with valuable trade skills, confidence and employability experience.



Fife

Scientific Laboratory Supplies (SLS) provided funding, donations and volunteer support to organisations across Fife, helping address food poverty, family hardship and community wellbeing. By supporting swimming lessons for children, assisting families in crisis, replenishing food bank supplies and volunteering at a community garden, SLS helped improve opportunities, reduce barriers and strengthen local communities, creating a positive and lasting impact across the region.



Midlothian

Alba Facilities Services (AFS) partnered with Bright Sparks, a Midlothian charity supporting children with complex additional needs and their families, to design and build a bespoke outdoor mud kitchen.

The new facility has enhanced opportunities for creative, sensory and imaginative play, helping support children's development while providing a valuable community resource that benefits the young people and families who rely on Bright Sparks' services across Midlothian.



Scottish Borders

Cambridge Bioscience supported Burnfoot Community Futures in Hawick through the ESES Communities Team, helping strengthen the charity's Burnfoot Foodshare Project, which redistributes surplus food and supports around 100 families each week. By donating essential long-life food items, the partnership helped improve food security, reduce waste and ensure accessible community support in the local area.

cambridge bioscience
Part of Europa Biosite

West Lothian

Bell Group partnered with community organisations in West Lothian through the ESES Communities network, providing practical support and resources where they were needed most. By responding directly to local community needs, the initiative helped strengthen community services, enhance opportunities for local residents, and create a positive, lasting impact for individuals and families across West Lothian.

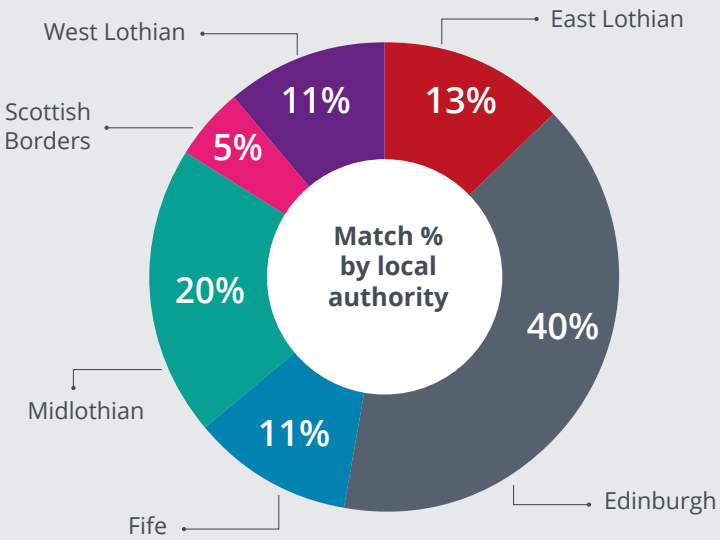
bell

University of Edinburgh Partnership

The University of Edinburgh are a key stakeholder in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal and have radically transformed their approach to purchasing, by embedding community benefit requirements directly into their procurement process, ensuring that supplier spend directly enriches local communities.

As part of their Community Plan (2025-30), The University have committed to delivering Community Benefits through their purchasing process. Supported by a key pillar in their procurement strategy, this initiative is driving positive social impact for communities throughout the ESES City Region.

Suppliers are encouraged to use the ESES Communities Portal to discover local priorities and connect directly with third-sector organisations and community groups. This streamlined matching process turns supply chain commitments into real, tangible value across the region - from local skills development to community project support.





View this short video on the partnership between ESESCommunities and the University of Edinburgh.

£20,900+
worth of donations & financial contributions made to community groups & charities.

£14,000+
worth of 'Benefit in Kind' materials etc.

16,200+
benefitting individuals across the ESES City Region area.

*** Figures from January 25 - October 26**

Social Business Activity





We launched the first version of our directory in Spring 2024 to provide suppliers and contractors with a practical 'go-to' resource for finding socially responsible businesses able to deliver the services they need.

Since then, we have continued to grow the directory, showcasing social enterprises, CICs and local organisations with a strong social ethos across Edinburgh, Fife, the Scottish Borders and the Lothians.

The directory is open to socially responsible businesses across the region that play an important role in their communities and are 'business ready' to take advantage of opportunities arising throughout the lifetime of major City Region Deal infrastructure projects.

We were delighted that the directory was adopted by Social Enterprise Scotland and widened into a national offering to strengthen supply chains across the country.

This support for the directory culminated in our team earning the 'Buy Social Scotland Market Builder Award' at the Social Enterprise Awards Scotland which celebrated "a public or private sector organisation, social enterprise or ecosystem partner that is opening doors through procurement, supply chain development, or partnerships that increase spending with social enterprises."

In addition, the IRES programme is proud to have signed the Buy Social Pledge, reinforcing our commitment to Community Wealth Building by creating opportunities for social enterprises and socially minded businesses to participate in and benefit from investment across the City Region Deal.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS SCOTLAND

2025
Winner
Buy Social Scotland Market Builder

UK SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS FINALIST

2025
Finalist
Buy Social Market Builder

GO AWARDS SCOTLAND 2026 / 27

2026 /2027
Finalist
Excellence in Social Value Award

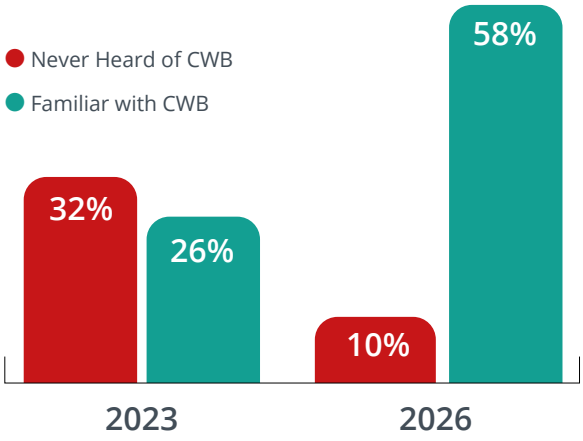
Community Wealth Building Focus

Since the launch of our project, we have been keen to support the promotion of the Community Wealth Building (CWB) agenda. In 2022 we commissioned The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to evaluate the activity and ambition within the projects being delivered under the ESES City Region Deal and embed CWB principles into regional projects. To build on progress and retain local wealth, the team established three core priorities to guide everyday business delivery: supporting the growth and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting progressive forms of ownership, and encouraging fair employment practices.

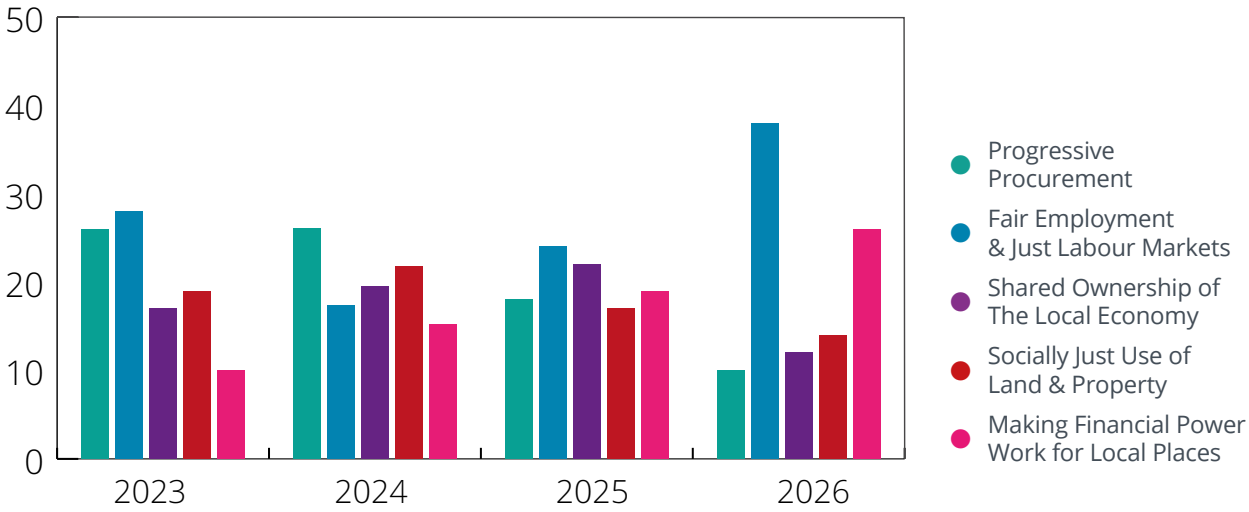
We have continued to facilitate this work by creating a dedicated Community Wealth Building section of our site which is home to our Social Business Directory, Community Wealth Building Toolkit and ESES City Region CWB Pledge.

Over the past years we have conducted a Community Wealth Building survey to gain an insight into the understanding within our region and to learn more about challenges across the 6 local authorities. We learned that awareness has grown about Community Wealth Building over the past 4 years, which is especially relevant with the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill passed earlier this year.

Awareness of CWB



Which of the 5 pillars is most important to you?

















A message of thanks

Over the past five years, ESES Communities has demonstrated the power of collaboration to turn investment into lasting social value. By connecting businesses, contractors, public sector partners, charities and social enterprises, the platform has helped create meaningful opportunities, strengthen communities and deliver tangible benefits for thousands of people across Edinburgh, the Lothians, Fife and the Scottish Borders. As we look to the future, we remain committed to building on this success, championing Community Wealth Building and ensuring that growth across our region continues to create positive, inclusive and lasting outcomes for all.

Thank you to every contractor, supplier, community organisation, social enterprise, public sector partner and local resident who has contributed to the success of ESES Communities over the past five years. Together, you have helped transform ambition into action and created a lasting legacy across South East Scotland.

CITY REGION DEAL
Edinburgh & South East Scotland

UK Government

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot







Please scan here to find out more about the projects detailed in this impact report.

https://www.esescommunities.org/5-year-report.html