

AYRSHIRE GROWTH DEAL

Annual Report 2025/26



Working together for a successful, fair and inclusive Ayrshire economy



*Our Vision is for Ayrshire to be
'a vibrant, outward looking,
confident region, attractive to investors
and visitors, making a major contribution
to Scotland's growth and local well-being, and
leading the implementation of digital technologies
and the next generation of manufacturing.'*



Contents

Forewords

Ayrshire Growth Deal Overview

Geographical Overview

Financial Statement

Governance Overview

Benefits Realisation Plan

Key Achievements

Benefits and Progress Dashboard Reporting

Our Progress

Our programmes and projects

Communities

Working for a Healthy Economy

Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund

Community Wealth Building

Economic Infrastructure

Ayrshire Innovation Park

I3 Flexible Business Space

Digital Process Manufacturing Centre

HALO, Kilmarnock

4	Aerospace	39
5	Prestwick Commercial Build	40
6	Aerospace, Skills and Technology Application Centre (ASTAC)	41
7	Prestwick Roads Infrastructure	42
10	Energy, Circular Economy & Environment	43
12	Community Renewable Energy (CoRE)	44
13	International Marine Science Centre (IMSE)	46
14	Hunterston	46
14	Tourism	47
14	The Great Harbour	48
14	Great Harbour Coastal Hub	49
26	Marine Tourism	50
27	Digital	51
	Building Digital Capital	52
	The Year Ahead	53
	Glossary	55

Forewords

As we report on the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) for 2025/26, the focus this year has been on increasing the pace of delivery. That shift is now clearly visible. More than half of overall projects are either in active delivery or have been completed, marking a significant step forward for the programme.

Progress has been practical and measurable. Projects have moved beyond planning into delivery on the ground, with investment reaching businesses, communities and key sectors across Ayrshire. The year has seen key projects take shape on the ground, namely the start of infrastructure works for the Ayrshire Innovation Park in Kilmarnock and final stages of the Great Harbour Coastal Hub coming to completion in Irvine.

This progress reflects stronger coordination across partners and a more delivery-focused approach overall. Community Wealth Building and Fair Work remain central to the programme, shaping how projects are delivered as well as what they aim to achieve.

The wider economic environment continues to present challenges, and this has required ongoing adjustment to plans and timescales. However, the Deal is now in a more mature phase, with clearer momentum and a growing track record of delivery.

Whilst there is still more to do, the progress made this year provides a solid base for the programme to build on in the coming year. The priority remains to maintain this pace and ensure that the benefits of the Deal are realised across Ayrshire.



Councillor Douglas Reid
Leader of East Ayrshire Council



Councillor Tony Gurney
Leader of North Ayrshire Council



Councillor Brian Connolly
Leader of South Ayrshire Council

Ayrshire Growth Deal Overview

The Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) is a £251.5 million, ten-year programme aimed at matching business growth opportunities to employment progression, developing the future workforce and community development. It is one delivery mechanism to achieve the region's economic vision, and is the most significant regional investment that Ayrshire has received in many years. At the highest level, the programme is focused on the achievement of economic growth and inclusive growth, with a clear focus on increasing innovation and productivity, whilst reducing inequality across the region.

The AGD is based around six themes:

The AGD Partnership is being driven forward by the Scottish Government, the UK Government and East, North and South Ayrshire Councils. The Deal presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the Ayrshire's regional economy.

Targeted, co-ordinated investment throughout the region acts as a powerful catalyst to stimulate growth, resulting in increased job opportunities and prosperity for Ayrshire, for Scotland and for the UK as a whole. The Deal is projected to unlock private investment of at least £300 million and support 7,000 jobs. This year's annual report summarises progress for the past 12 months of the programme, from April 2025 to March 2026, with the exception of benefits realisation statistics shared, which show accumulative figures from the start of the programme to March 2026.



Aerospace

£80m



**Economic
Infrastructure**

£70.7m



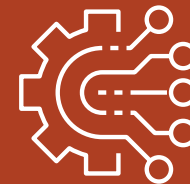
**Energy, Circular
Economy and
Environment**

£51.8m



Communities

£11.5m



Digital

£14m

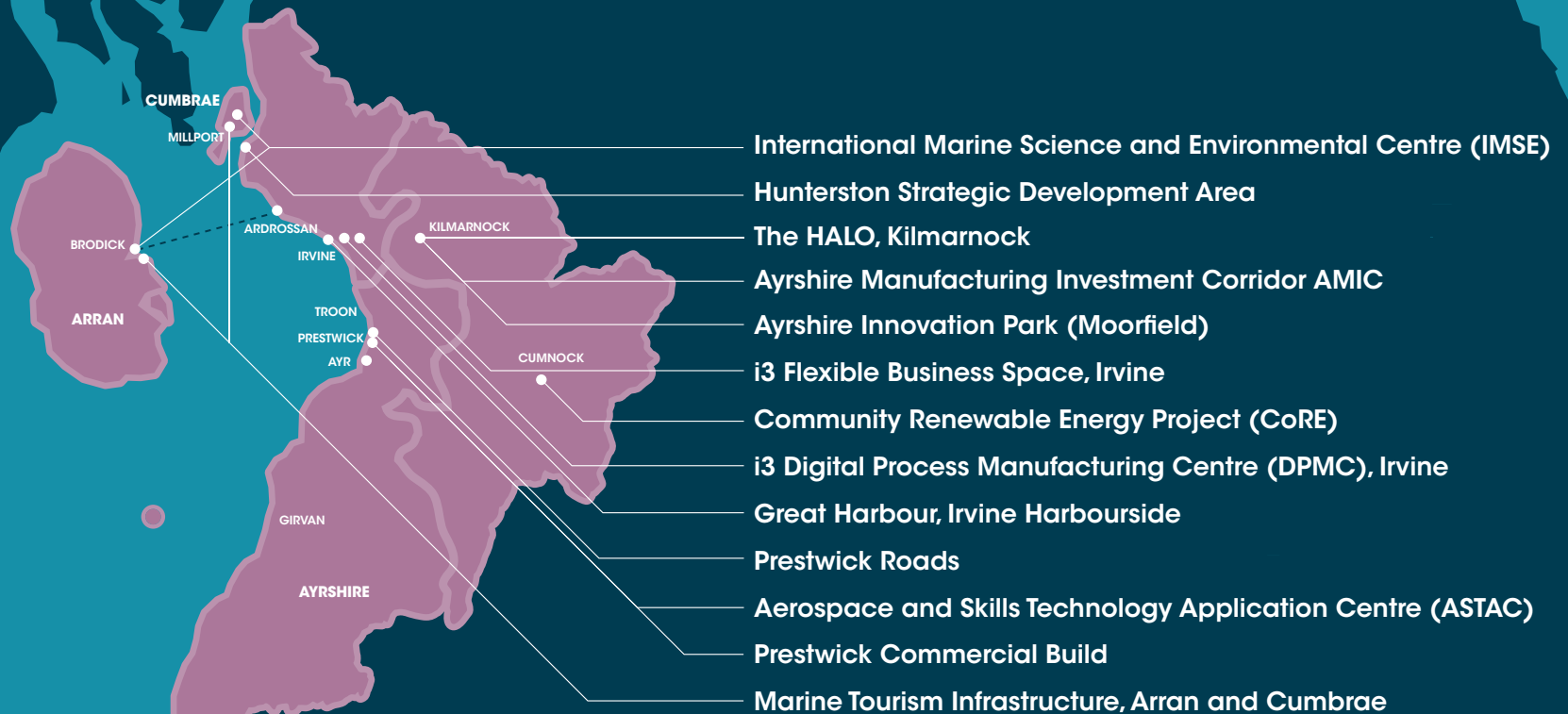


Tourism

£23.5m

Geographical Overview

The map below shows the location of projects across the region.



Financial Statement

At the financial year-end 2025/26, Partner and Government spend on the Deal was 17%. This is set to increase to 27% by the end of the financial year with a projected £24.88m spend in 2026/27. Although the overall actual spend for 2025/26 is 5% lower than was initially anticipated for the financial year, projects are on track to increase spend and momentum in the new financial year.

Table 1: Programme Expenditure

PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE TO MARCH 2026 (PARTNER AND GOVERNMENT SPEND)	
Total spend to date	£ 42.099m
Total still to be spent/claimed	£ 209.401m

The Deal has received a total of £30.368m in committed leveraged investment. £23.262m is in committed capital leverage and £7.006m in committed revenue leverage. This has come about due to the proactive work of Partners to provide the right conditions to attract outside investment and willingness to collaborate for the benefit of delivering objectives of the Deal.

To reach the Deal's original ambitions, efforts are being amplified in the development and delivery of the capital projects aiming to attract the most substantial private investment specifically in Energy, Circular Economy and Environment and Economic Infrastructure and Aerospace themes.

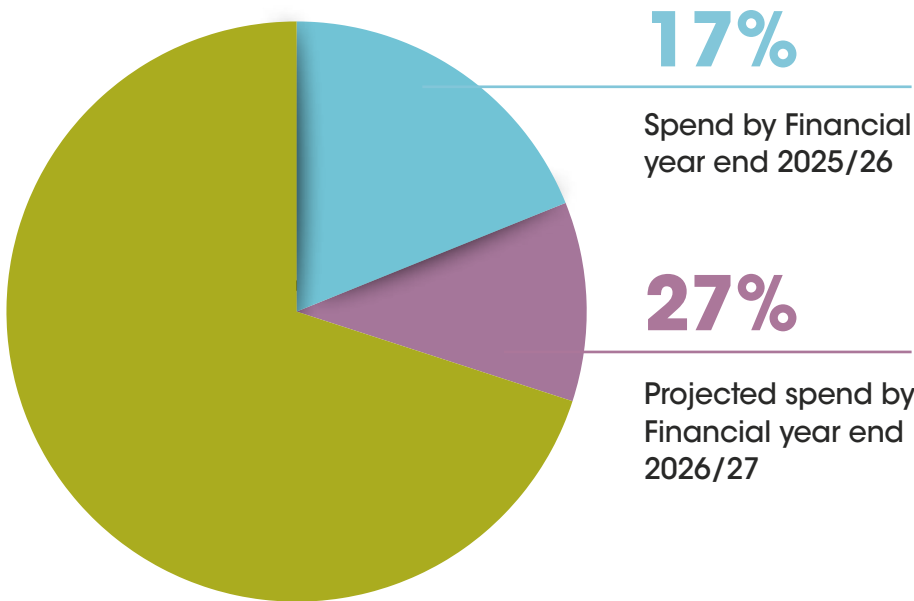


Table 2: AGD Investment Breakdown

Programme	Ayrshire Growth Deal Project	UK Government Grant £'000	Scottish Government Grant £'000	Councils £'000	Total Government Grant £'000	Capital leverage committed by other Partners £'000	Revenue leverage committed by other Partners £'000	Total Support £'000
Aerospace	Aerospace & Skills Technology Application Centre	4,000	1,000	6,000	11,000	0	49	11,049
	Prestwick Commercial Build	28,000	12,000	2,000	42,000	1,520	0	43,520
	Prestwick Roads	0	17,000	10,000	27,000	0	0	27,000
Economic Infrastructure	HALO Kilmarnock	3,500	3,500	2,000	9,000	12,484	2,918	24,402
	Ayrshire Innovation Park	10,000	25,500	9,000	44,500	0	38	44,538
	i3 Flexible Business Space	0	11,000	4,000	15,000	5,673	0	20,673
	i3 Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre (DPMC)	6,225	0	1,000	7,225	1,000	3,601	11,826
Energy, Circular Economy & Environment	Community Renewable Energy Project (CoRE)	17,000	0	2,500	19,500	1,665	69	21,234
	Hunterston Strategic Development Area	12,000	0	0	12,000	40	0	12,040
	International Marine Science & Environmental Centre (IMSE)	11,275	0	4,000	15,275		20	15,295
Tourism	Great Harbour	0	9,000	5,000	14,000	879	167	15,047
	Marine Tourism	0	9,500	0	9,500	0	143	9,643
Digital	Building Digital Capital	11,000	3,000	0	14,000	0	0	14,000
Communities	Working for a Healthy Economy	0	5,000	0	5,000	0	0	5,000
	Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund	0	3,500	0	3,500	0	0	3,500
	Community Wealth Building	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	0	3,000
TOTAL FUNDING		103,000	103,000	45,500	251,500	23,262	7,006	281,768

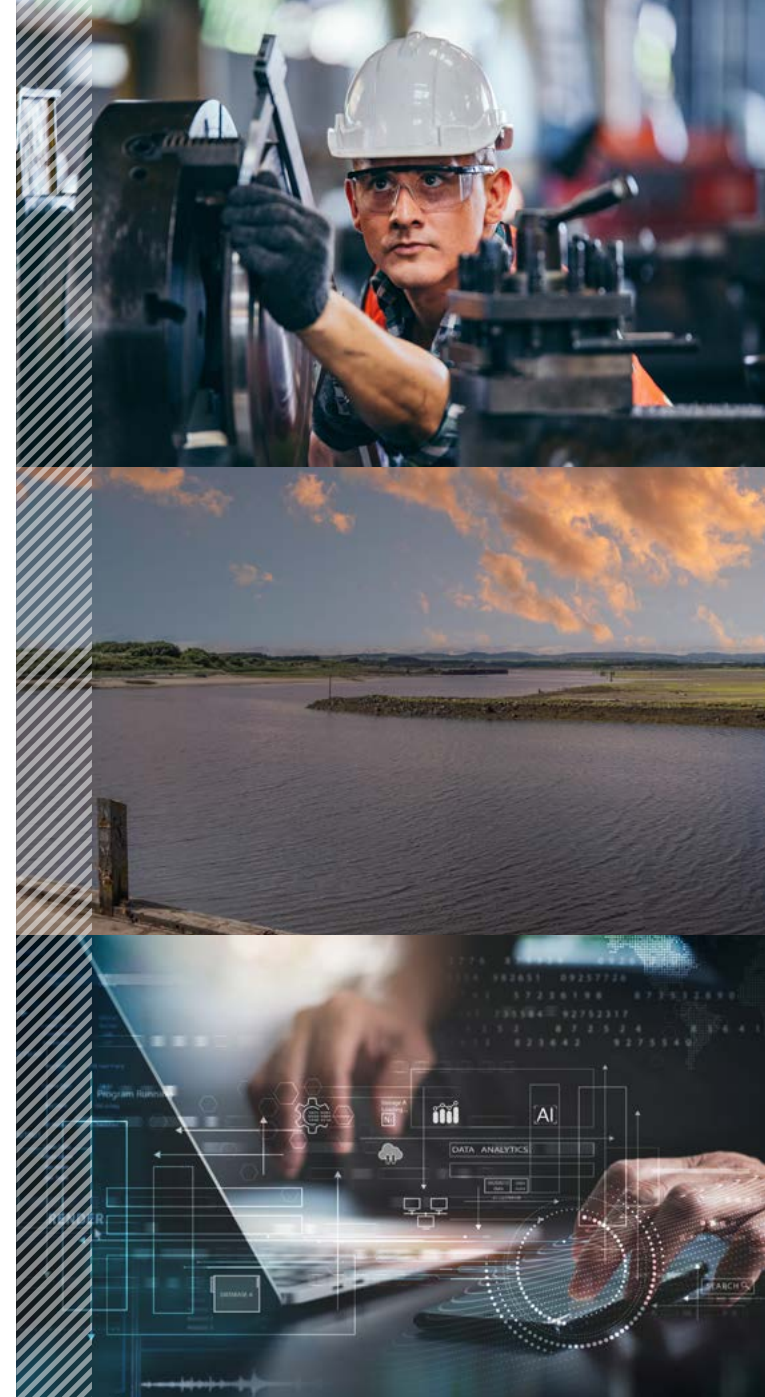
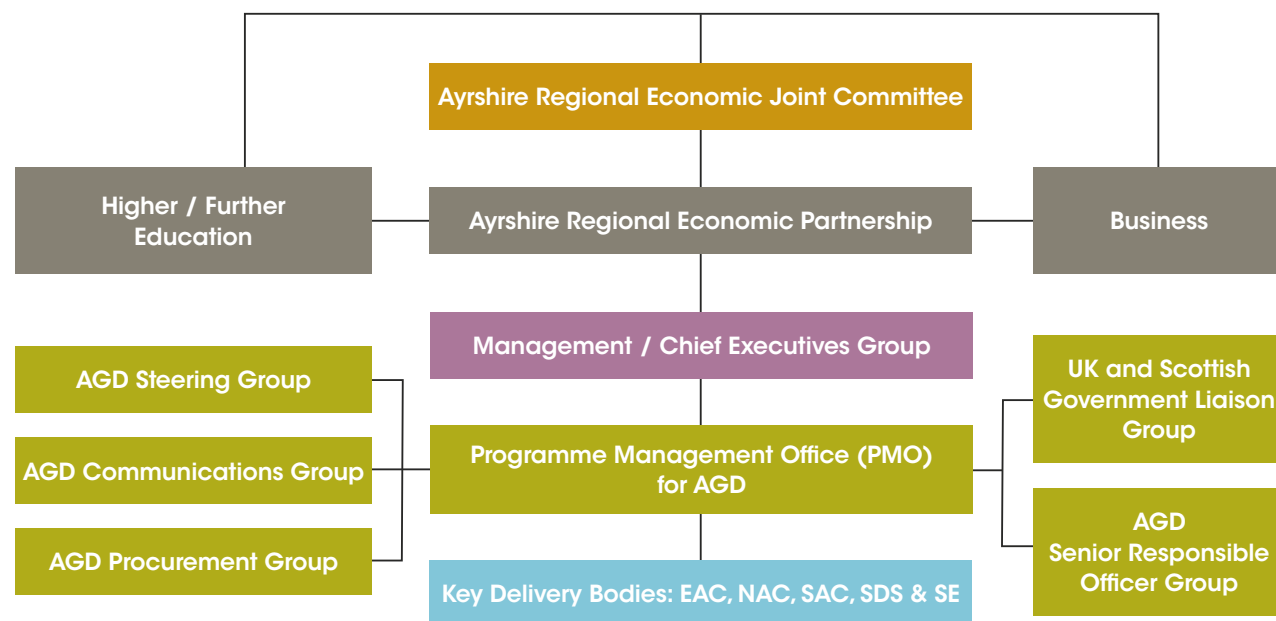
Table 3: Financial Summary

		2025/26	Cumulative (2018/19 - 2024/25)					
Programme	Ayrshire Growth Deal Project	AGD Grant claimed £'000	AGD Government Grant claimed £'000	Government Grant % claimed	Government Grant £'000	Total Government Grant claimed £'000	Partner spend £'000	Overall total spend £'000
Aerospace	Aerospace & Skills Technology Application Centre	0	0	0%	5,000	0	1,236	1,236
	Prestwick Commercial Build	897	2,554	9%	40,000	3,451	0	3,451
	Prestwick Roads	0	0	0%	17,000	0	570	570
Economic Infrastructure	HALO Kilmarnock	0	7,000	100%	7,000	7,000	2,000	9,000
	Ayrshire Innovation Park	5,597	0	16%	35,500	5,597	2,028	7,625
	i3 Flexible Business Space	0	3,885	35%	11,000	3,885	783	4,668
	i3 Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre (DPMC)	663	0	11%	6,225	663	331	994
Energy, Circular Economy & Environment	Community Renewable Energy Project (CoRE)	415	0	2%	17,000	415	977	1,392
	Hunterston Strategic Development Area	0	0	0%	12,000	0	263	263
	International Marine Science & Environmental Centre (IMSE)	0	0	0%	11,275	0	243	243
Tourism	Great Harbour	2,858	955	42%	9,000	3,813	457	4,271
	Marine Tourism	0	0	0%	9,500	0	761	761
Digital	Building Digital Capital	0	0	0%	14,000	0	12	12
Communities	Working for a Healthy Economy	949	2,727	74%	5,000	3,676	0	3,676
	Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund	403	536250	27%	3,500	939	0	939
	Community Wealth Building	0	3,000	100%	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
TOTAL FUNDING		11,782	20,657	16%	206,000	32,439	9,660	42,099

Governance Overview

The diagram below summarises the Ayrshire Growth Deal's current governance structure.

Governance is updated and reviewed regularly to ensure and optimise duties of scrutiny and endorsement predominantly through the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board and Joint Committee. Over the past year improvements have been made to maximise potential opportunity in supporting the Deal to quicken the pace, given the pressing timescales for major projects to begin delivery phases and successful completion before the funding period ends.



Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee

The Joint Committee has ultimate control over key strategic and investment decisions required to support the Deal and the wider strategy. The Joint Committee comprises Elected Members from each of the three Ayrshire Councils together with representation from partners and businesses.

Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board

The Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership sits below the Joint Committee with responsibility for progressing the day-to-day business of the Partnership and the AGD, as well as scrutinising key decisions which are then recommended to the AEJC for approval. This Board comprises Elected Members from the Joint Committee, as well as more extensive representation from public sector partners, the third sector and businesses.

Management / Chief Executives Group

The Management/Chief Executive group has oversight of the Deal and where needed, provides strategic guidance to the Partnership and PMO. They also receive updates from the PMO on the progress made on the Programme and individual projects.

Programme Management Office (PMO)

The PMO reports directly to the Chief Executives Group, Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board and Joint Committee, overseeing the operations of the Deal, and a formal Review is held between the Programme Partners and UKG/SG annually known as the Annual Conversation.

The reporting schedule is set out in the Annual Grant Offer Letter by the UKG/SG and includes:

- a monthly report and meeting to discuss the financial spend and forecast
- a quarterly report and meeting to discuss the finance, milestones, benefits, risks & issues
- a quarterly update and meeting to discuss communications and procurement
- check point reviews for each project.

Annually the PMO provides:

- an Annual Report
- updated Implementation Plan
- updated Benefits Realisation Plan
- updated Financial Plan.

The PMO is also part of a wider City & Growth Deals UK PMO group that meets regularly to share best practice.

Key Delivery Bodies and Regional Partners

These include but are not exclusive to Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, and Ayrshire College.

Audit

The Programme is subject to regular internal audits and has taken part in audits by Audit Scotland relating to the Deal externally. The findings, recommendations, and progress on follow up actions are reported to the Partnership Board and Joint Committee.

Benefits Realisation Plan

The Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) Heads of Terms document states that the realisation and evaluation of the impacts of the AGD is a fundamental requirement of all AGD Partners. The AGD Benefits Realisation Plan (BRP) sets out the overarching approach for monitoring and managing the outcomes of the Deal, in line with delivery plans and objectives. We will continue to monitor and evaluate outputs and outcomes each year as our projects develop.

The BRP indicates the importance of measuring Strategic Added Value (SAV) in order to capture the additional benefits of AGD partnership relationships and outcomes. By capturing SAV, we can highlight where partnership working across AGD projects has led to one or more of the effects set out below, using a qualitative ranking approach:

Strategic leadership: Articulating and communicating regional development needs, opportunities and solutions to partners and stakeholders in the region and elsewhere;

Strategic influence: Carrying out or stimulating activity that defines the distinctive roles of partners, encouraging commitment to shared strategic objectives and effective fund allocation;

Leverage: Providing financial and other incentives to mobilise partner and stakeholder resources (equipment, people and funding);

Synergy: Using organisational capacity, knowledge and expertise to improve information exchange and knowledge transfer and coordination and/or integration of the design and delivery of interventions between partners; and

Engagement: Setting up the mechanisms and incentives for more effective and deliberative engagement of stakeholders in the design and delivery of regional and sub-regional priorities and programmes.

The BRP figures have been updated and included in this report. A new approach to benefits reporting is being developed to enable live accessibility and updates through a Power BI Dashboard hosted on the AGD website. It is important to note that the projected benefits featured in this report for projects which are still in development, are subject to update and change through the progression of their respective business cases and delivery. Evidence of SAV and related benefits are already apparent across a range of AGD activities and are only set to increase as further projects come into operation.



Key Achievements



3234 jobs supported



6795 support interventions through Working for a Healthy Economy



13 outline business cases completed



£30m of additional investment committed



1152 organisations supported through Community Wealth Building



10 full business cases completed



£32m invested from the Scottish and UK Governments



286 new enterprises supported



7 Projects in delivery



2 projects completed



£14m private sector investment



429 individuals gaining accredited training through the Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund

Benefits and Progress Dashboard Reporting

A Power BI Dashboard has been developed by the Deal to allow the benefits and progress of the Deal to be more clearly available and accessible on an ongoing basis. The dashboard builds on the commitment to improve the Deal communications by showcasing the projects and the benefits that will be realised across the region.

The dashboard will continue to evolve and become more interactive as projects progress. Going forward, the dashboard will be made available on the AGD Website.

AYRSHIRE GROWTH DEAL

Our Progress

Our Place

Our People



Our programmes and projects

Key Highlights

Improved Performance

The 2025/26 financial year represents the strongest delivery performance to date for the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD). The programme has seen a marked increase in both the development and approval of business cases, alongside a step change in the number of projects progressing into delivery.

During the year, a significant volume of business cases were submitted/reviewed, /redeveloped/approved, including:

- Ayrshire Engineering Park (AEP) Outline Business Case (OBC)
- Ayrshire Innovation Park (AIP) Phase 1 Full Business Case (FBC)
- Marine Tourism (Cumbrae) OBC
- Community Renewable Energy (CoRE) Phase 1 Full Business Case.
- The AIP Phase 3 Full Business Case was also submitted for review and subsequent approval in 2026
- The Prestwick Commercial Build Full Business Case received conditional/partial approval

Many more business cases are in development for approval in the coming year. This represents the highest level of business case activity achieved by the programme in a single year.

Progression into delivery has also accelerated. Key projects, including CoRE and the first phase of the Ayrshire Innovation Park (combining projects AMIC and AEP), have formally entered the delivery phase, signalling a transition from planning to implementation across a growing proportion of the programme.

At the construction stage, several capital projects have reached, or are approaching, completion. The first phase of the i3 Flexible Space is now complete, with a tenant secured for the business space. The Great Harbour Coastal Hub is also nearing completion, with delivery expected in August 2026. These milestones demonstrate tangible outputs emerging from investment.



Key Highlights

Transition to Delivery

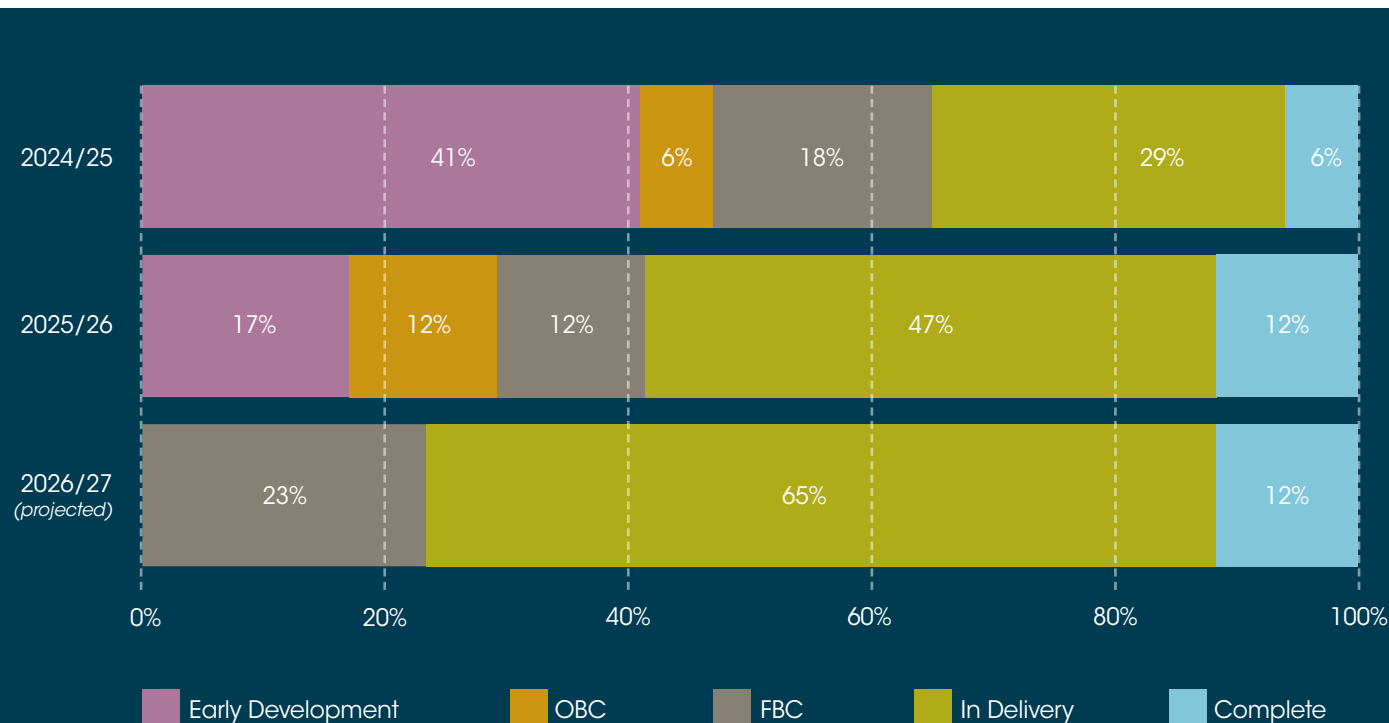
Overall, programme delivery is continuing to build momentum. At the end of 2025/26, 47% of projects are in delivery, with this expected to increase to 65% by the end of 2026/27.

This trajectory reflects the sustained progress made in moving projects through the development pipeline and into delivery, and indicates a maturing programme with an increasing focus on implementation and outcomes.

The chart below shows the overall progress that has been made and is expected across the programme's 17 projects over the three year period from 2024 to 2027.

It is important to note that the projects are represented as a whole rather than by phases.

Chart 1: Programme Progression



Key Highlights

Meaningful Impact

Building on the success of the Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund (ASIF) Employer Grants Programme: ASIF IGNITE has been developed with industry. The objective of this initiative is to identify and invest in pre-employment training opportunities delivered by industry, for industry.

The ASIF IGNITE programme has provided unemployed individuals with accredited training, practical work experience and a clear pathway into employment, aligned to prioritise skills and target groups. The initiative represents a targeted investment in local talent, addressing skills gaps in key sectors while supporting sustained employment.

IGNITE courses were designed to reduce unemployment by focusing on high-demand industries, equipping participants with industry-standard skills and supporting businesses to secure a future workforce.

The first programme, delivered by J & D Pierce Ltd, supported progression into high-value industrial roles through training at its advanced Glengarnock facility. On completion, participants achieved Coded Welder status, providing industry-recognised certification.

A second strand, delivered with Bridgend Motor Group, introduced participants to the motor trade through a six-week programme combining hands-on experience with insight into automotive retail and maintenance.

Both pilot courses have been extremely successful with real job outcomes and offers for participants. Further IGNITE programmes are set to be rolled out across the region in the coming year.

Unemployed to employed - now a certified welder

"The course has been fantastic. The instructors and boys on the course have been brilliant and supportive. It has genuinely improved my life and gave me stability and skills I didn't know I was capable of, especially so soon."

Sam, ASIF IGNITE Participant | Welder | J & D Pierce



Key Highlights

A flying re-start

Last year's Annual Performance Report highlighted that all projects within the programme's Aerospace theme were undergoing re-development and change management processes which was a lengthy and rigorous process involving many stakeholders and decision makers.

Following the conclusion of this, both UK and Scottish Governments support the direction of travel for the Aerospace theme. Business cases have been swiftly developed by South Ayrshire Council as lead Authority, focusing firstly on the first phase of the Commercial Build project, which has leveraged up to £40 million of private sector investment.

This major development as part of the Commercial Build Project, is the first of phase of the £80m of investment set to transform the aerospace cluster for the benefit of Ayrshire, Scotland and beyond.



The sky is the limit

"This is a fantastic example of significant public sector funding – including £32m UK Government Ayrshire Growth Deal money for the Prestwick Aerospace Cluster – unlocking substantial private sector investment, boosting employment and driving economic renewal in Scotland."

"Helping secure Prestwick Airport's longterm future is a priority for the UK Government and Ryanair's decision to build its largest heavy maintenance hangar here – creating and supporting 1,200 jobs – is a massive win for Ayrshire and a powerful vote of confidence in our hugely talented local workforce."

"Our collective efforts mean that Ryanair is delivering 450 new high-skilled jobs, including 60 apprenticeships, ensuring that the next generation of Scottish engineers has a world-class career path right on their doorstep."

"The sky's the limit for Ayrshire as a global leader in the aerospace sector."

Kirsty McNeill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Scotland Office | UK Government

"I am delighted that Scottish Government investment will support the creation of 450 skilled jobs at Prestwick, which will have a major economic impact in Ayrshire and beyond. Ryanair has chosen to expand at Prestwick because of the talent and expertise on the ground and it is testament to the skills of the existing workforce."

"My government will continue to do everything in our power to support the creation of good jobs and to support economic growth in Scotland."

John Swinney, First Minister | Scottish Government

Key Highlights

Regional Investment Alignment

The Ayrshire Growth Deal provides a key opportunity for alignment with wider regional priorities and funding. An example of where this has come into successful effect is the AGD investment alignment with the UK Government's Innovation Regions Investment – the Ayrshire 5GIR programme.

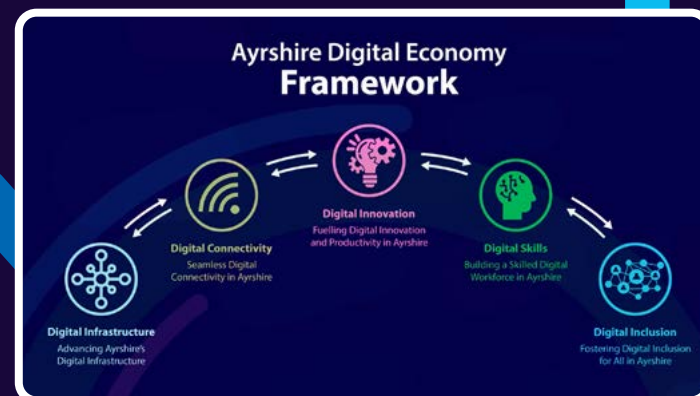
"It has been an exciting year of collaboration across Ayrshire as we've taken the foundations built through the Ayrshire Growth Deal and our Innovation Hubs and used them to establish the Ayrshire 5G Innovation Region."

"The 5GIR programme gave us the chance to test, learn and innovate across advanced manufacturing, aerospace, tourism and skills. It has given us valuable knowledge, time and experience, and above all, it has built strong partnerships across public, private and academic sectors."

"These foundations are now directly informing the AGD Building Digital Capital Programme, ensuring that we are not only investing in networks and infrastructure but also creating the skills, capacity and confidence for Ayrshire to thrive as an innovation region."

"What excites me most is the commitment from our partners: councils, universities, colleges and industry, who are all invested in making this work. We are no longer working in silos; we are building a connected ecosystem that provides businesses, learners, and councils with the tools to succeed in the digital economy."

Julia McMurdie, Digital Renewal Lead | Ayrshire 5GIR



Key Highlights

From commencement to completion

Over the year the AGD has seen major capital projects both commence and be successfully completed.

Ayrshire Innovation Park broke ground in late 2025 and Flexible Business Space Phase 1 reached completion around the same time. Additionally, the Great Harbour Coastal Hub is nearing full completion. At the time of publishing the report the Great Harbour Sea Monster Play Park will be in use.



Ayrshire Innovation Park, Kilmarnock



The Great Harbour, Irvine



i3 Flexible Business Space, Irvine

Key Highlights

AGD and Education

Over the last year the AGD has increased engagement with education partners to align investment in key sectors with curriculum development, professional learning and skills pathways.

The programme's engagement with education has been driven by events such as the "Influencing the Influencer – Food, Drink & Agriculture" event. This event, held in June 2025, brought together educators, careers advisers and industry representatives to strengthen the connection between education and key growth sectors in Ayrshire.

The event combined industry insight, practical demonstrations and direct engagement to give educators a clearer understanding of current opportunities and skills demand and potential integration of this in existing curriculum.

A strong turnout from both education and business highlighted the shared commitment to improving pathways into these sectors. Speakers showcased real career journeys and practical examples of how food, drink and agriculture can be embedded within the curriculum, while also demonstrating how schools can work with industry partners to deliver relevant learning experiences.

Overall, the event marked a positive step in raising awareness of sector opportunities and strengthening the role of educators as key influencers in shaping young people's career choices - supporting the wider ambitions of the Ayrshire Growth Deal.



Click here
to read the
key note speech
from Rachel
Munro, owner
and founder of
The Rebel Baker.



Key Challenges

External Environment

The Ayrshire Growth Deal continues to operate within a challenging external environment. Political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors all influence the pace and shape of delivery. These include public-sector funding constraints, construction cost pressures, business case assurance requirements, net zero legislation, skills gaps and the need to maintain strong alignment across multiple delivery partners.

Development and Delivery Dependencies

The Ayrshire Growth Deal is delivered through a multi-partner structure involving the UK Government, Scottish Government, East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and a wide range of regional partners. This provides significant strategic strength, bringing together national investment and local delivery expertise. It also means that alignment, decision-making and approval processes must be carefully managed across different organisations, policy priorities and governance routes in order for the programme and projects to move forward successfully and to continuously reduce the risk of delays.

Optimising the structure is particularly important as the programme continues to move from development into delivery. Major capital projects require continued coordination between local, regional and national partners, with business cases, financial approvals, reporting requirements and change management processes all needing to be sequenced effectively.

The opportunity is to continue to develop and enhance efficiencies and effectivity in the Deal's partnership structure and a strong regional platform from which to respond. The Ayrshire Regional Economic Joint Committee, Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership, Chief Executives Group and Programme Management Office provide the programme with mechanisms for scrutiny, escalation, endorsement and shared decision-making and a commitment to continuous improvement.

During 2025/26, partners have continued to work collaboratively to maintain momentum, progress business cases and support projects as they move into delivery. Continuing to strengthen the partnership, overcoming key challenges collectively, is one of the Deal's most important opportunities and will remain central to successful delivery in the year ahead.



Key Challenges

Cost Inflation

Cost Inflation has had a significant impact on the Deal to date, and it is anticipated that further global conflicts of 2026 will continue to have a negative impact on the initial value of the AGD investment.

Working with the Glasgow Intelligence Hub, the PMO reports a deflator calculation of 21%, at the time of writing (April 2026). Essentially the £251.5m awarded to the AGD in 2020 has the purchasing power of approximately £199.2m in today's prices.

The wider economic environment continues to present challenges for the capital projects within the Deal. Inflationary pressure, construction-sector capacity, supply chain uncertainty, affordability constraints and pressure on public finances. These factors can all affect project budgets, procurement, delivery timescales and the confidence of private-sector investors.

Partners are working together to manage the impacts of cost inflation, although it is impacting longer development timescales. Projects are required to rescope and adjust to fit original budgets or alternatively rely on sourcing additional investment. Overall this increases dependencies and complexities of the programme moving forward at pace.

This context makes the delivery progress achieved during 2025/26 particularly significant. Some examples are the advancement of the Ayrshire Innovation Park in Kilmarnock and the completion of the first phase of i3 Flexible Business Space in Irvine. There are promising developments in the Prestwick Aerospace cluster, including an existing £40m of leveraged private investment.

The need to maintain affordability, confidence and pace in an everchanging local, regional, national and global landscape is an ongoing challenge for delivery partners to navigate and overcome.

Table 4: GDP Deflator Calculation

GDP Deflator Calculation			
Value (£m)	Reference Year	Expression Year	Relative Value (£m)
£251.5	2020	2026	£199.2

Source: David Boyle, Principle Economist | Glasgow Intelligence Hub



Table 5: PESTEL Overview

PESTEL Overview	Response / Opportunity
Political	Politically, the Ayrshire Growth Deal benefits from strong commitment across both governments and the three Ayrshire Councils. This partnership model provides a significant platform for regional investment, but it also requires careful alignment across policy priorities, approval processes and governance structures. Governance structures continue to be optimised to support joint decision-making, escalation and continued delivery focus. The AGD has experienced increased political interest, and dedicated information sessions are held for elected representatives and an engagement strategy is being developed and implemented for MPs and MSPs. In addition to these engagement sessions, the AGD has developed a live progress data dashboard that will be made publicly available for relevant progress information to be accessible through the Ayrshire Growth Deal website.
Economic	Rescoping efforts in response to economic pressures have formed a key part of activity this year. Private sector investment has been sought and continues to be leveraged to mitigate known and unknown cost inflation impacts. Despite challenges and ongoing economic uncertainty, capital projects are moving into delivery, strengthening investor confidence and creating business growth opportunities. Local authorities are adapting and responding accordingly to address these continued challenges and costs are being tested via procurement. The PMO continues to work with Partners as well as benefit from economic expertise such as that from the Glasgow Intelligence Hub to anticipate and proactively plan for economic challenges affecting the programme.
Social	From a social perspective, the Deal continues to respond to long-standing challenges around inequality, health-related barriers to work, skills gaps and access to employment. These challenges underline the importance of ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and that Ayrshire residents are equipped to benefit from emerging opportunities. During 2025/26, skills activity has continued to build momentum, namely through the ASIF and CoRE projects, with new training pathways in aerospace, welding and low-carbon technologies. This reinforces the Deal's wider purpose: not simply to deliver capital projects, but to connect people and communities with the opportunities created by regional investment.

PESTEL Overview	Response / Opportunity
Technological	Technologically, the Deal is operating in a period of rapid change. Digital adoption, automation, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, low-carbon energy systems and new transport technologies are reshaping business needs and workforce requirements. The programme is responding by investing in modern business space, innovation assets and skills pathways that support adoption of new technologies. Projects such as Building Digital Capital, i3 Flexible Business Space, the Digital Process Manufacturing Centre and Ayrshire Innovation Park provide a strong foundation for Ayrshire businesses to innovate, grow and compete in future-facing sectors.
Environmental	Environmentally, the programme is being delivered at a time when net zero, energy resilience and climate adaptation are central to public investment decisions. These requirements create additional design, cost and delivery considerations, particularly for capital projects. However, they also create opportunities for Ayrshire to lead in low-carbon innovation and community energy. The CoRE demonstrator at Meagher Court shows how the Deal can support practical action on retrofit, fuel poverty, renewable energy and healthier homes, whilst creating learning that can inform wider housing and community energy activity across the region.
Legal Regulatory	Business case development, procurement, subsidy control, planning, environmental consents and grant management all require careful coordination and can influence both development and delivery timescales. However, these processes also provide important assurance that public investment is being managed properly and that projects remain aligned with the Deal's objectives. The PMO will continue to play a critical role in maintaining compliance, supporting project teams and ensuring that the programme can move forward at pace while retaining strong governance and accountability.

Communities

Focussing on the health, wellbeing and progress of our local communities.



April 2025

- ASIF Aerospace course commences at Ayrshire College
- Successful conclusion of CWB



May 2025

- Fifth round of ASIF employer grants programme takes place



June 2025

- Final evaluation report received for CWB with key findings shared



July 2025

- Initial health and wellbeing programme launches for unemployed clients via WfHE



October 2025

- CWB showcased at the Just Transition Summit in Edinburgh



January 2026

- ASIF IGNITE course is launched with J&D Pierce
- Specialist autism support training delivered as part of WfHE



February 2026

- New IGNITE course is launched at Bridgend Motors



Working for a Healthy Economy

Overview

Working for a Healthy Economy (WfHE) is an occupational health initiative which was launched in May 2021 to help Ayrshire residents overcome health-related barriers to employment and support economic growth through the Ayrshire Growth Deal. Delivered by NHS Salus, it assists unemployed individuals in gaining work, helps employed individuals retain jobs, and supports local businesses in improving workforce health and productivity.

The WfHE project is designed to support individuals experiencing mild to moderate health conditions. Support interventions are provided over the course of approximately 20 weeks, experienced NHS Case Managers guide individuals to explore, identify and make progress with the health and wellbeing difficulties that are impacting their ability to make positive progress. This approach is unique in offering more comprehensive and intentional support rather than quick fix solutions.

Progress Update

The Working for a Healthy Economy project was implemented in May 2021. The Project continues to deliver with continuous improvement included as required to ensure the service meets project needs.

The benefits of an occupational health service are significant against the backdrop of inactivity and long-term health issues, as individuals are supported across Ayrshire to retain good health to enable them to access and stay in work.

- To date, 1,856 unemployed individuals have engaged with the Working for a Healthy Economy service. The clinical outcomes demonstrate significant improvements:
- 35.5% reported reduced anxiety levels
- 35.9% experienced a reduction in depression
- 34.0% showed improved overall health and wellbeing

These outcomes reflect the positive impact of the service on participants' mental and physical health. The project continues to deliver with positive feedback from beneficiaries and employability project staff.

Headline Achievements

1856

Unemployed individuals supported through the Working for Healthy Economy Service

491

People accessing funded treatments

35%

Anxiety levels reduced in participants engaging with WfHE support

287

Unemployed individuals securing work

Next Steps

Working for a Healthy Economy (WfHE) will continue to deliver with continuous improvement included to ensure the service meets the needs and requirements of individuals. An evaluation of the project is being reviewed and finalised by the University of Glasgow and will be shared with key stakeholders and on the AGD website in due course.



Case Study



Client situation

Cathy was referred into the WfHE service by her Employability Advisor in June 2024 for support with her mental health. During assessment Cathy stated that her son was going through a period of self-destruction and facing criminal charges. Cathy felt lost and did not know what to do and how to move forward.

"The service has helped me improve a lot and I would not have been able to move into work without the support from my case manager and Employability Advisor. I would recommend this service to other people who are looking for support."

Cathy

It was decided by the WfHE case manager to deliver additional sessions at the initial stages of engagement in order to ensure that Cathy felt she could trust the service and to develop a strong therapeutic alliance. Cathy would often become very upset during these appointments, stating that her situation was hopeless, she had recently terminated her employment due to the stress of caring for her son.

Client goals

Action Plan Goals were centred around activity which would improve the Cathy's quality of life, provide a meaningful purpose and ultimately improve her mental wellbeing.

In collaboration with her case manager the following goals were set:

- Improve symptoms of anxiety and depression using a CBT based model.
- Increase meaningful activity, prioritising self-care and wellbeing.
- Improve self-esteem and confidence, stop the negative chatterbox!
- Progress towards a return to work, with the support from her Employability Advisor.

Support recieved

Cathy met with her case manager in face to face sessions every fortnight at her local employability hub.

The case manager utilised the following resources which would support the client to improve her health:

- Guided CBT based self help
- Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques
- I am App
- Positive Self Talk

The case manager also supported Cathy to engage in sessions within the community for additional support for financial wellbeing and to explore volunteering opportunities:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Council for Voluntary Organisations East Ayrshire
- Shine Women's Mentoring Service.

Outcomes

In February 2025 Cathy commenced voluntary work, delivering support to young people. Cathy was provided with excellent feedback by the voluntary provider on her performance, enabling her to grow in confidence, she was able to take on additional training sessions via this post. Cathy's wellbeing has vastly improved as evidenced by the results of her clinical assessment. Cathy is actively using strategies learned in session to support with her mental wellbeing.

In July 2025, Cathy progressed towards a job in care. Cathy has been enjoying her new role and is ensuring she is taking on the recommendations made by her case manager and continuing to prioritise her wellbeing.



Case Study

Client situation

James was referred to the Working for a Healthy Economy Service by his employability advisor in South Ayrshire. James had been made redundant from previous employment due to ill health. This resulted in James questioning his self-worth and purpose. Furthermore, James was also experiencing increased stress and anxiety due to uncertainty about the future and impending financial strain.

"More funding should be given to services such as the Working for a Healthy Economy Programme. It's so important especially for young men to gain support on mental health in the workplace. Knowing what's out there in terms of resources / support has been a massive help to me! No-one came to help me when I was made redundant, until Salus came on the scene. If I had half the information I have now, I would have put up a better fight in terms of my pension / redundancy package, but that's all in the past! I feel more comfortable discussing my challenges / health problems with employers, now I know my rights, thanks to the information provided. I can't thank my Salus Case Manager and Employability Advisor enough for all the help!"

James

Action plan goals

- Support James to prioritise physical and mental well-being through guided self-help, recommended exercise routines, healthy eating, and participation in meaningful activities which would enable James to feel a sense of fulfilment in life.
- Support James to maintain social connections, and participate in community activities to help combat social isolation.
- Support and encourage James to reflect on career goals, update CV, and encourage James to network with contacts to explore potential career opportunities.

Support recieved

The Case Manager met with James face to face in fortnightly appointments. Intervention was centred around action plan, individualised goals and actions were made within each appointment and reviewed in the following to ensure James was making progress towards his overall objective and goals. Additionally, the Case Manager signposted James to activities within his local area, listed below. The Case Manager provided encouragement and motivation to James to help them to attend and participate in each of these services.

- Yoga Classes
- Mens Shed
- Honest Mens Group - Ayr United
- Ayr Stollers - Mens walking group
- Andys Man Club
- South Ayrshire Activity for Health Programme

Outcomes

James was able to implement the strategies and techniques which were provided to him by his Case Manager to improve his mental health and wellbeing.

James started to engage in meaningful activity in his local area which enabled him to increase his social connectedness and improve his quality of life. In preparation for returning to work James was provided with information and advice from his Case Manager on reasonable adjustments in the workplace and the Health Adjustment Passport. This increased James's confidence regarding returning to work.

James reported that this information has significantly improved his mental health by reducing his stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation associated with his disability. James was offered a permanent job which he has commenced and is delighted about.

Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund

Overview

The Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund (ASIF) works with delivery partners, employers and employees to deliver a range of skills interventions to address skills gaps across the region and equip people with the skills to compete effectively in the labour market, ensuring Ayrshire has the skills required for the future. The project commenced in June 2022 and is progressing well.

Progress Update

The project has continued to progress successfully and has completed 8 rounds of Employer Grants funding. ASIF Sub Committee continues to enable the governance and decision making process for the delivery of the ASIF interventions and evaluation of approved investments. In addition to Employer Grants, the project has worked with Ayrshire College to enable Aerospace courses. The ASIF IGNITE initiative (p17), has been a key highlight of progress and impact over the past year.

Headline Achievements

429

People benefitting
from accredited
training

108

Local businesses
benefitting from
upskilled workers

100%

of businesses
have noted a
positive impact
since receiving
ASIF funding

92%

Successful
employer
applications

Next Steps

The ASIF project will continue to deliver and build on the momentum of the last year, especially increasing and strengthening partnership with industry to delivery direct local benefit.

The project will enter its final year of delivery in 2027/28, so key focus over the next year will be on understanding impact and sustainable legacy aspects of the investment.

ASIF Employer Testimonials



"We have been able to provide staff with qualifications and training that supports the individuals in their career progression and improves knowledge within their specialised areas."



"ASIF enabled our organisation to develop our staff in an area of the sector which has been expanding rapidly, and we hope to be able to keep pace with trained staff"



"Confidence and security are the most important things; the ASIF fund gives us the confidence to continue investing in Ayrshire young people."



"ASIF encourages Ayrshire businesses to address skills gaps and develop employees within priority groups, increasing motivation and productivity within the business and providing opportunities for growth."



"The ASIF has allowed us to accelerate our growth plans, with training giving our current staff a broader knowledge base"



"It pretty much does what it says on the tin. It's investing in people and allowing Ayrshire businesses to grow."

Employee Testimonials



"The ASIF training's been a total game-changer for me. I've gone from second-guessing myself on tricky repairs to feeling confident tackling pretty much anything that comes through the door. It's not just about the technical stuff either, I feel like I'm genuinely growing in the business. Getting the chance to move into the system-building team is something I've worked toward for a while, and this training helped make that happen. I'm proud of the progress, and I'm excited for what's next."

Marc, Trainee Technician | Utopia Computers



"Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund has helped me to upskill within the workplace."

"Being able to approve my own work improves efficiency, productivity and allows me to support my colleagues. Having recently returned to the workforce after having children, retraining and upskilling can be challenging. ASIF has enabled my workplace to provide on the job training, improving personal growth and supporting me in the next steps in my career."

Lydia | IMT Aviation Limited

Community Wealth Building

Overview

The Community Wealth Building (CWB) programme concluded in 2024/25, following four years of delivery across the Ayrshire region, supporting local enterprises to embed CWB principles to strengthen their operations, alongside access to tailored advice and a £1m grant fund. The programme achieved strong engagement, reaching over 1,150 businesses - including 154 start-ups under 12 months old - demonstrating effective support for new, micro and social enterprises. Through targeted consultancy and financial support, businesses addressed key challenges such as digitisation, marketing and energy resilience, contributing to over 1,000 jobs safeguarded and more than 160 projected new roles, as well as supporting recovery from economic pressures.

Progress Update

As the Deal's CWB programme is now complete, regional partners continue to consider and implement the strategic recommendations from the programme's evaluation and actions are ongoing to support this.

The Regional Economic Strategy Delivery group will also be developing a new regional Community Wealth Building Action Plan in line with the Scottish Government's recently approved CWB (Scotland) Act.

Headline Achievements

The AGD CWB Programme, now complete, was selected to be showcased at the Just Transition Summit in October 2025.



Economic Infrastructure

Creating conditions for growth, providing local jobs, strong regional supply chains and skills development across a number of sectors in Ayrshire.



April 2025

- AMIC OBC receives approval from the UK and Scottish Governments



June 2025

- AEP OBC receives approval from the UK and Scottish Governments
- Influence the influencer AGD food and drink education event takes place

July 2025

- AIP infrastructure FBC submitted



September 2025

- AIP infrastructure FBC fully approved
- Delivery commences onsite for the AIP infrastructure work
- Education awareness event held at DPMC

November 2025

- AEPB hosted in person at DPMC and includes a tour of i3 Flexi Space



December 2025

- Official launch of AIP takes place with a Ministerial visit
- DPMC robot dog collaboration with Bacardi



February 2026

- Topping out ceremony takes place for phase one of i3 Flexi Space
- Primary school engagement sessions take place at DPMC



March 2026

- AIP phase three FBC submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments
- i3 Flexi Space phase one handed over to the new tenant

Ayrshire Innovation Park

Overview

The Ayrshire Innovation Park (AIP) supports the development of two AGD projects – The Ayrshire Manufacturing Investment Corridor Project (AMIC) and the Ayrshire Engineering Park (AEP). The AIP will provide expansion and development of the Moorfield industrial site in Kilmarnock.

With a total average of almost 32 acres, the projects are projected to collectively contribute over £272m to the local economy over a 25-year period. The construction phase will create 245 local jobs and a further 280 jobs will be created within the food, drink and engineering sectors.

The AIP is set to contribute towards meeting current demand for new industrial space within East Ayrshire and the wider region and address market failure with investment in commercial space. There is currently a lack of high-quality sites and premises in Ayrshire to support the growth ambitions of local Ayrshire companies and inward investment, the creation of the AIP will address this need.

Upon completion, the site will provide 2,914 square meters of food grade industrial space along with a Food and Drink Centre of Excellence (1020 sqm) which will provide facilities (test kitchens, pilot plant kitchens, butchery area) along with office and presentation space. 9,950 square meters of industrial space will be created to support the advanced manufacturing and engineering sectors. In addition, the site will provide 5 serviced plots for purchase to allow businesses with specific needs to self-build.

Progress Update

Infrastructure works at Ayrshire Innovation Park began on 22nd September 2025, with a 12-month schedule for completion. This marks the first step in delivering a high-quality site to support innovation and business growth. The next phase of the project is due to start on site in February 2027, followed by the last phase commencing in June 2027. The site is expected to be fully operational by 2028/29.

Benefits Projected for AIP

£272m

projected net
additional GVA
improvements
for the Ayrshire
Region over a 25
year span

245

construction jobs
supported

60

start-ups enabled
through the AMIC
project

280

full-time
equivalent jobs
created through
commercial
development

Next Steps

As the Ayrshire Innovation Park entered its delivery phase last year, an ambitious schedule is planned to build on this in 2026/27 with the ambition for AIP's three key phases all anticipated to complete development and commence delivery by the end of March 2027.

I3 Flexible Business Space

Overview

I3 Flexible Business Space Phase 1 was officially marked as complete at one of Ayrshire's major sites for business and industry – i3 in Irvine.

"The i3 Business Park is a key strategic site not only for us as a Council but also Ayrshire as a whole. It already consists of a wide and varied business base including antibiotics manufacturer GSK, engineering technology business Booth Welsh and natural and herbal remedy manufacturer Vogel. It also hosts the Digital Process Manufacturing Centre (DPMC) and is a real skills hub for industry and academia. This new development, which will be followed by the second phase of development, will provide even more opportunities to attract large-scale inward investment opportunities to support advanced manufacturing uses."

Councillor Eleanor Collier, Cabinet Member for Green Environment and Economy



Members of the Regional Economic Partnership Board noted the progress of the i3 Flexible Business Space project in November 2025.



Benefits Projected

£19.8m

projected net
additional GVA
improvements
for the Ayrshire
Region over a 25
year span

1688

development
space unlocked
(square meters)

154

full-time
equivalent jobs
created through
commercial
development

95

new jobs
created and 84
construction jobs
created

Next Steps

With the i3 Flexi Space Phase One in its evaluation phase, Phase Two is the key focal point of the 2026/27 schedule. Shorter turnaround timeframes for its Full Business Case endorsement is required to allow for procurement processes to be completed ahead of construction starting in Autumn 2026.

Digital Process Manufacturing Centre

Overview

The first phase of Digital Process Manufacturing Centre (DPMC) has been operational at i3 business park in Irvine for over a year. The project is being delivered in partnership with NMIS (National Manufacturing Institute Scotland) / University of Strathclyde, and CPI (Centre for Process Innovation) and with support from Scottish Enterprise.

The Phase 1 Pilot, using £1M of the £6M AGD funding is now operational at engineering company Booth Welsh in i3 and is resourced with 3 engineers, a business development manager and Head of Facility. The project is targeting companies within the process manufacturing sectors, local companies, including SME's looking to grow and expand and inward investment companies from Ayrshire, Scotland, the UK and beyond.

The facilities support businesses to improve their productivity and innovation and reduce their carbon footprint, through digital technology in the form of equipment that demonstrates augmented reality and virtual reality, energy monitoring, condition monitoring, factory automation, process automation, cybersecurity, conditioning and robotics. The centre also offers space for industry networking and collaboration opportunities.

The remaining AGD funds will contribute towards a Phase 2 and the construction of a permanent facility. The project is complemented by the new flexible advanced manufacturing space at i3, also supported by the Ayrshire Growth Deal. Combined, both projects will create a central focus and cluster of industry and innovation at i3, with an overall investment of c£21M from the Ayrshire Growth Deal. DPMC is also benefiting by being a pilot for the 5GIR UK Government funded initiative, improving digital connectivity for businesses.

Progress Update

Since officially launching in March 2025, DPMC has had a fantastic first year of operation with over 12 events, 130 organisational visits, 5 industrial projects and have also hosted STEM engagement events with 18 different schools across Ayrshire.

Benefits Projected

£4.6m

Leveraged investment
(including all sector investment)

130

Organisational visits hosted

5

Industrial projects improving efficiencies.

18

School visits hosted with focus on STEM

Next Steps

The DPMC project will continue operation of the Centre and in addition, focus on the evaluation of Phase 1 to inform the development of Phase 2 of the project.

Developing technical demonstrators

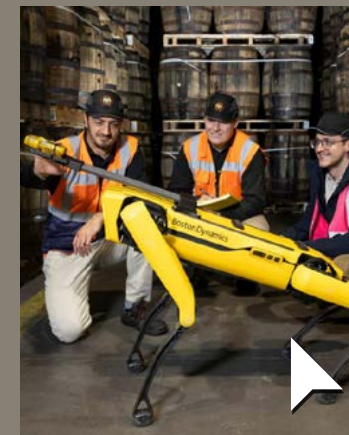
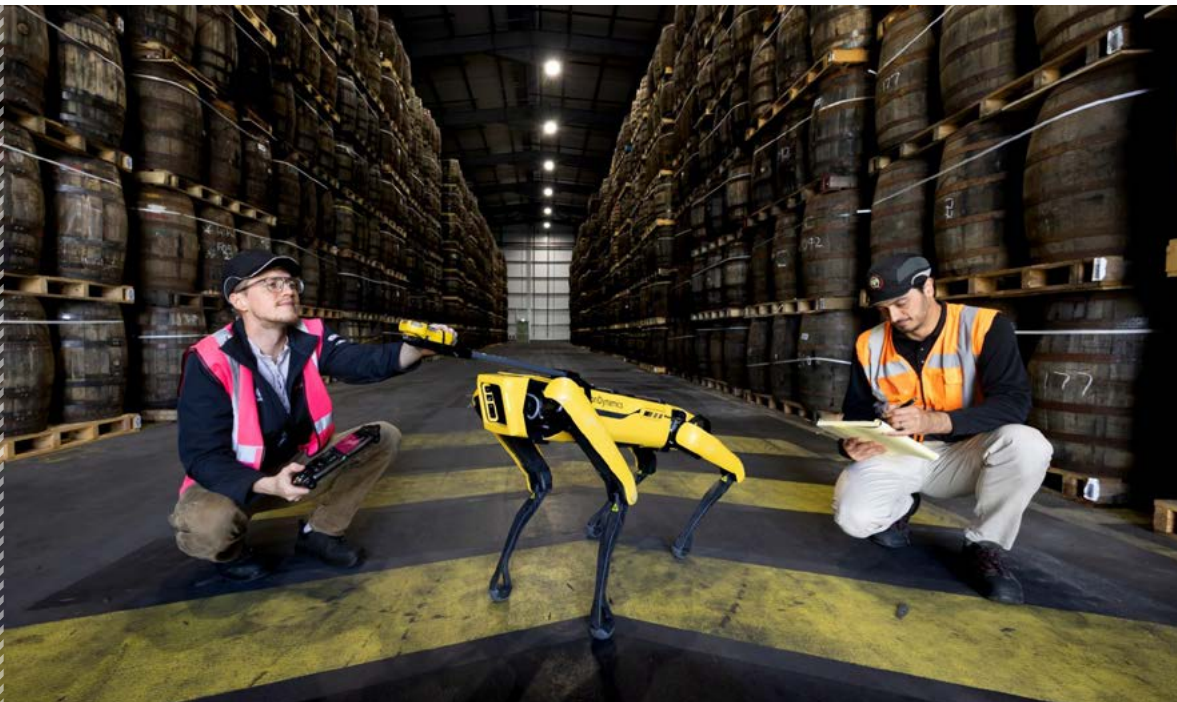
DPMC's key focus is on developing technical demonstrators inline with the demands of the local manufacturing sector, including a flexible robotic and modular transportation testbed aimed at inline quality inspection, digital traceability (for specific use cases compliant with upcoming EU Digital Product Passport regulations) and practical digital twins leveraging the NVIDIA Omniverse framework to simulate processes, optimise and integrate AI models that address sector challenges.

The DPMC team are keen to engage and learn more about the domain challenges facing the local manufacturing sector. Ultimately, seeking to support avenues of digital transformation that can add value within companies, whilst supporting the growth of digital talent within the region.



North Ayrshire Primary School visit to the DPMC, Irvine

DPMC continues to engage with education with a video from North Ayrshire Council as Lead Authority for the project, highlighting an example of this.



An example of the support DPMC can provide to industry is their collaboration with Bacardi to improve efficiencies in their whisky maturation process. The project deployed a robotic dog to detect expensive ethanol vapour leaks in whisky casks. You can read about this in the article by clicking the arrow.

HALO, Kilmarnock

Overview

The HALO Kilmarnock project was completed in April 2021 and formally opened in April 2022. The HALO continues to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem designed to stimulate innovative business practices between new and established businesses.

Progress Update

The HALO will continue to develop as a supportive environment for innovation and enterprise. With a focus on digital skills and low-carbon technologies, the site will continue to explore and welcome the prospect of new collaborations and business activity, helping to build local capacity in areas such as cyber security and data innovation. These developments contribute to the wider goals of the Ayrshire Growth Deal by encouraging skills development and creating opportunities for businesses to grow in a sustainable setting.

Read HALO's latest news via their website:



HALO®
DIGITAL, CYBER & INNOVATION PARK

Benefits Projected

£205m

GDP projected
to be generated
through HALO
and full benefits
realisation

693

jobs supported
through the
HALO project in
Kilmarnock

9150

Visitors engaging
with the site

4069

Square meters
of development
space unlocked

Aerospace

Focussing on positioning Ayrshire as one of the UK's leading centres of aerospace development and activity.



May 2025

- Prestwick Proposition change management request submitted to the government



June 2025

- Prestwick Roads workshop takes place



July 2025

- Prestwick Proposition change management request receives approval from the government



September 2025

- Prestwick Proposition approved at AEPB and AEJC



October 2025

- Commercial Build FBC submitted to the government



February 2026

- Conditional Commercial Build FBC approval received from the government



March 2026

- Ryanair announcement at Prestwick as part of the Commercial Build programme



Prestwick Commercial Build

Overview

Ayrshire hosts a globally recognised aerospace cluster centred in Prestwick, which is known for its technical capability. As the sector enters a sustained period of global growth, the opportunity for Ayrshire, Scotland and the UK is both significant and time sensitive.

With firms seeking to address supply chain gaps and scale production, Ayrshire is well placed to attract investment, expand capacity and grow market shares. Realising this potential depends on how effectively the region can create a competitive environment - supported by skilled labour, innovation capability and critically, available commercial space.

Readily available floorspace is a key determinant of investment decisions, and currently the Prestwick Aerospace cluster is at full capacity. This constraint limits Ayrshire's ability to secure further inward investment and respond to global demand.

The 'Prestwick Proposition' Commercial Build programme addresses this issue, aligning with the UK's Industrial Strategy (Invest 2035) and Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, supporting innovation, high-value manufacturing and international competitiveness. By developing and increasing operational and business space, the project supports Prestwick to maintain and grow its position as a key contributor to national economic growth.

Progress Update

The Prestwick Commercial Build project has made good progress over the year with key development progress taking place, resulting in conditional approval of the Full Business Case with final approval expected in the Summer of 2026.

Next Steps

The Prestwick Commercial Build project will continue to accelerate through the business case process, aiming to ensure that all project components are in delivery and construction has commenced by March 2027. This objective carries high dependencies, namely on full approval of business cases as well as successful and efficient procurement and planning processes.



Aerospace, Skills and Technology Application Centre (ASTAC)

Overview

ASTAC is proposed as a combined innovation and training hub to support the long-term growth of the aerospace sector at Prestwick.

Driven by strong global demand and increasing pressure on production and MRO capacity, there is a clear opportunity for Ayrshire to expand its role - provided it can scale skills, infrastructure and innovation capability.

The project addresses key constraints, including workforce shortages, limited SME capacity for innovation, and lack of integrated facilities. By combining skills development with applied innovation, ASTAC will help accelerate technology adoption, improve productivity, and support sector growth. It will also strengthen Prestwick's competitiveness as an investment location, enabling it to capture growing market opportunities and support significant job creation across the aerospace cluster.

ASTAC aims to provide classrooms, workshops, technology demonstration, training, equipment and staff to support aerospace businesses. It will scan for relevant future technologies and processes that will drive expansion and growth of these sectors via inward / secondary investments and by supporting SMEs into these high growth, high productivity sectors. ASTAC will specifically address technology and process adoption, business development and skills development needs including the urgent need for a training centre specialising in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO & D-MRO). The facility will be operated by Ayrshire College and supported by National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) and University of the West of Scotland (UWS).

Progress Update

The focus over the last year for ASTAC has been on working with partners to develop the project, overcome cost challenges to build into the redevelopment of the Outline Business Case (OBC). The OBC is due for review by UK and Scottish Governments in Summer 2026.

Next Steps

SAC as lead for the project are working closely with NMIS alongside the existing partnership with Ayrshire College to redevelop the OBC for submission this year, ahead of FBC development and delivery commencement in 2027.



Prestwick Roads Infrastructure

Overview

The Prestwick Roads project has been re-scoped following the programme reset, shifting focus from previous non-viable developments to supporting growth in the aerospace cluster whilst reducing impacts on local communities.

Proposals aim to improve transport access, manage heavy traffic, and enhance safety, accessibility and connectivity. This will support industry expansion, unlock key sites, and improve public transport and sustainable travel options.

Significant growth in MRO activity and new facilities such as ASTAC are expected to increase demand on infrastructure over the next 3–5 years. Improved road access is therefore critical, with AGD funding required to deliver upgrades where no alternative funding is currently available.

Progress Update

This year has focused on OBC development and design, including a proposed budget revision to clarify scope. Key sites are shortlisted, with further consultation with Transport Scotland planned.

The OBC contract is underway, with initial work establishing the evidence base through traffic modelling, site visits, and condition assessments. Design options are being progressed, alongside engagement with Transport Scotland on appraisal and modelling. The Strategic Case is also in development, aligned with programme objectives.

Next Steps

Continued focus is on developing the project, so it can reach latter stages of business case approval by March 2027.

Benefits Projected for the AGD's Aerospace theme

1100

jobs supported

£110m

private investment
leveraged

18,720m²

of development space unlocked

£361m

projected
net additional
GVA over a
25 year span

Energy, Circular Economy & Environment



Developing low carbon energy technologies and solutions. Ayrshire's location and natural resources offer the potential to create new jobs, reduce carbon emissions and contribute to achieving net zero by 2045.

May 2025

- First IMSE project board meeting takes place



June 2025

- CoRE phase one FBC submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments



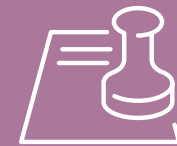
August 2025

- IMSE options workshop with key stakeholders takes place on Cumbrae



September 2025

- CoRE phase one FBC receives approval from AEPB and AEJC



November 2025

- CoRE phase one FBC approved



January 2026

- Delivery commences onsite for the Meagher Court element of CoRE phase one



March 2026

- Vocational training launched for EV mechanics as part of CoRE phase one
- IMSE OBC submitted to the PMO and under review

Community Renewable Energy (CoRE)

Overview

The Community Renewable Energy (CoRE) project showcases how a green recovery can transform our rural towns and villages and make our communities better connected, healthier and improve the standard of living through a just transition, whilst supporting the creation of long-term sustainable jobs.

CoRE will act as a catalyst to stimulate inclusive growth and community wealth building, whilst providing a pipeline of education and training to help make Ayrshire a vibrant and attractive place to live, therefore addressing the root causes of deprivation, fuel poverty and de-population within our communities.

Progress Update

This year has seen significant progress in the full business case development for Phase 1 of the project, which is expected to enter into delivery in the coming year. Approval of the FBC will give the green light for six pathfinder projects to commence:

- Retrofit of housing at Meager Court in Barshare, Cumnock to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions
- Large scale 'net zero' transition for Rankinston, including renewable energy generation, district heating, housing retrofit and sustainable transport initiatives
- Community electric car club project with Coalfields Community Transport
- Inclusive e-bike club in Cumnock
- Equiflex Flexible Energy project to shift energy consumption from peak to off-peak times when electricity is cheaper
- Provision of professional technical advice and support to access the Scottish Government's Community Energy Renewables (CARES) funding scheme, to help more groups implement decarbonisation and insulation measures.

Benefits Projected for CoRE:

267

jobs supported

£1.7m

investment leveraged
(inclusive of all sectors)

127

households supported in reducing fuel poverty through housing retrofit improvements and heat decarbonisation

£12.7m

projected net additional GVA over a 25 year span



CoRE gets underway in Cumnock

In early 2026, the first CoRE demonstrator project commenced at Meagher Court in Cumnock, retrofitting three blocks of flats to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

Funded through the Deal and additional external sources, the phased project will test scalable retrofit approaches to support net zero housing and improve accessibility for residents.

CoRE Skills Programme

East Ayrshire Council launched a pilot vocational training programme through the Ayrshire Growth Deal’s Community Renewable Energy (CoRE) project to address skills shortages in the electric vehicle (EV) and hydrogen automotive sector.

The programme began in Cumnock, where local mechanics received accredited EV training delivered in partnership with Emergency One and GTG Training Ltd. Further sessions are expected to train up to 30 participants.

A schools element, delivered with Ayrshire College, will introduce pupils to EV and hydrogen technologies to support future skills pathways. The programme, partly funded by the AGD and Transport Scotland’s HGV Challenge Fund, supports the development of a local skills pipeline aligned to industry demand. The table below gives example to training targets exceeded:

Table 5: CoRE Skills Programme Training

Type of training	Target	Actual
School Based Pathways – supporting young people from Robert Burns Academy and Doon Academy to learn about EV/HV	12	25
Upskilling for existing traditional automotive employees working in small-medium enterprises (IMI Level 1)	8	22
TOTAL	20	47



Next Steps

Following its first phase entering delivery in November 2025, CoRE continues focus on ensuring the success of this phase, especially in relation to informing Phase Two of the programme.

Phase Three, The Centre of Excellence, is currently progressing through a change management process relating to scope, location and budgetary change proposals. The change management process is anticipated to conclude as soon as possible, to allow the project to progress through its FBC stage and into delivery.

International Marine Science Centre (IMSE)

Overview

The IMSE OBC builds on established strengths at the Field Studies Council (Millport) and COAST (Arran), aligning with the Ayrshire Growth Deal and national economic, environmental and net zero priorities. It addresses market failures in marine R&D, coordination and public goods provision, supporting Green Book principles. A place-based approach targets coastal and island communities to improve access to jobs, skills and research. Delivery through a networked hub model enhances existing assets, improving cost-effectiveness and reducing risk. The strong reputation of delivery partners supports inward investment, partnerships and external funding.

Progress

North Ayrshire Council, as lead for the project has been working closely with key partners and experts in marine sciences and protection, culminating in the finalisation of the Outline Business Case. The review and redevelopment of the OBC is expected to take place over the Summer of 2026, with the FBC expected later in the year.

Next Steps

IMSE is continuing development work through a strong partnership approach, set to maximise investment through world class facilities, leading on blue economy innovation, research and demonstrator activities.

Hunterston

With key aspects of the project's original plan being reconsidered, rescoping efforts are taking place on the proposed way forward. A formal update is anticipated following initial engagement with the Government on options and possibilities moving forward.

Benefits Projected for IMSE:

50

jobs supported

10,000

STEM participants
engaged
annually once
IMSE facilities are
operational

25

universities using
IMSE facilities
annually

£46.6m

projected
net additional
GVA over a 15
year span

Tourism



Tourism is a key sector in Ayrshire and this programme will build on and strengthen the existing tourism offer to make the region a highly desirable place to visit and live, work and invest in.

April 2025

- Ongoing engagement with stakeholder in Arran for Marine Tourism



May 2025

- Marine Tourism Cumbrae OBC submitted to the government



June 2025

- The Great Harbour Coastal Hub (phase one) naming ceremony takes place



September 2025

- Updated Cumbrae OBC submitted
- The Great Harbour Maritime Mile consultation takes place



November 2025

- Cumbrae OBC approved by the government



March 2026

- Marine Tourism Arran stakeholder sessions take place



The Great Harbour

Overview

The Great Harbour is a key tourism led, regeneration, place making and destination development project for Irvine and the wider Ayrshire Coast with £14m committed from the AGD to a phased programme of works which will lead the physical transformation of the wider location, create capacity to support community participation and commercial opportunities.

The development of the Great Harbour will create a unique coastal destination comprising a number of key assets to attract new visitors to the area and create jobs. It will build on the unique qualities of place, creating a national waterfront destination focused on a series of activity hubs and dynamic event spaces. These will include heritage, arts, maritime and outdoor active leisure and activity hubs, providing an animated waterfront that connects from town centre to coast. It will unlock a series of secondary development opportunities which will contribute to the creation of a premium regional coastal destination that delivers Community Wealth Building opportunities.

Progress

This year, the Great Harbour has seen significant progress on its first phase, the Coastal Hub. At the end of 2025/26, construction was nearing completion with the official launch of the Great Harbour Coastal Hub is anticipated in Summer 2026.

Next Steps

Following the official launch of the Coastal Hub and it entering its operational/evaluation phase, focus will be on the development of Phase Two of the project. The Full Business Case for Phase Two of the project is anticipated in early 2027.

Benefits Projected for the Great Harbour:

245

jobs supported
incl. new jobs
created and
temporary
construction jobs

135k

increase in day
visitor numbers
per year

8,000

square meters of
new or upgraded
public realm
space

3

new or upgraded
cycle pathways

Great Harbour Coastal Hub

The name for Great Harbour Coastal Hub's new playpark at Irvine Harbourside was confirmed as Sea Monster Park, following engagement with local young people. The winning entry, submitted by Greenwood Academy pupil Lewis Templeton, was selected from 95 suggestions and celebrated at a community event.



The Sea Monster Play park is approaching completion and is anticipated to be open to the public in Autumn 2026.

Marine Tourism

Overview

The Marine Tourism Programme is a place-based initiative focused on North Ayrshire, with projects in Cumbrae and Arran. It will deliver step-ashore marine infrastructure, including a transit marina at Millport and new pontoons at key Arran sites as an initial phase towards a future marina.

The programme aims to strengthen tourism, support local businesses and communities, and improve marine access and transport. It will create jobs and skills opportunities, promote active marine leisure, and contribute to sustainable wellbeing economies. It is also expected to stimulate further investment in Ayrshire's marine tourism and wider blue economy.

Progress in Business Case milestones has increased sector confidence, whilst Scottish Government support has encouraged ambition within island communities. Local engagement has shaped programme design and outcomes, supporting resilient islands and sustainable growth aligned to people, place and purpose.

Progress

The Cumbrae Project Outline Business Case was approved by the Scottish Government in November 2025 and the Arran Outline Business Case is in final stages of development for submission in 2026. Stakeholder engagement with communities and regulatory bodies will conclude the marina detail design and operator lease stages that will lead to the main contractor procurement for Full Business Case submission. The Arran Project will secure the sites, land and sea, to establish a network of step-ashore pontoon facilities, develop community-led operations and advance marine planning and consenting. This will help finalise the Arran Outline Business Case process and initiate Full Business Case stages of work.

Benefits Projected for Marine Tourism:

110

marina/
pontoons/new
berths created
through the
Marine Tourism
programme

101

jobs supported
through the
programme
including new
jobs created
and temporary
construction jobs

67k

increase in
overnight visitor
numbers per year

33k

increase in day
visitor numbers
per year

Next Steps

The Marine Tourism Arran OBC has now been developed and is under internal review. It will be submitted in tandem with an update to the Cumbrae OBC, through a change management submission.

The Marine Tourism programme has planned extended time between OBC and FBC development to allow for completion of relevant marine licensing and permissions.

Digital

The Building Digital Capital (BDC) project is aimed at enhancing digital infrastructure and capabilities across the region.



June 2025

- Building Digital Capital update paper presented to Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board



July 2025

- Building Digital Capital update paper submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments



September 2025

- Change management request submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments



October 2025

- Building Digital Capital internal workshop takes place



Building Digital Capital

Overview

The BDC programme seeks to deliver the agreed objectives of the digital offer of the signed Deal;

- Position Ayrshire as the 'go-to' region for smart manufacturing and digital skills.
- Enhance digital infrastructure and connectivity.
- Attract and develop more innovative and internationally focused companies that are more likely to have higher levels of productivity through developing key infrastructure and targeted business support programmes.

Overall, the BDC programme seeks to deliver an enhanced digital infrastructure, support a range of related skills and a sense of greater ambition which can support innovation, future growth and increased participation in the economy. Specifically, the BDC programme seeks to ensure the delivery of enhanced connectivity infrastructure to help attract global businesses, enabling the innovation ecosystem and inward investment opportunities that have the potential to support/create digital hubs, 5G private networks and advanced wireless capabilities that will facilitate the conditions necessary for the creation of high value jobs. The use of 'host' AGD projects and the inclusion of enhanced digital infrastructure will help move Ayrshire towards a world-class digitally connected region that is attractive to investors across many elements of the digital economy.

Progress

The Building Digital Capital project has made key progress this year in agreeing the direction of travel for the programme with both the UK and Scottish Governments, allowing the relevant business case phases to commence. The Programme Business Case submission is expected in June 2026 for the overall programme. Associated business cases will be submitted later in the year to allow component projects to move forward.



Next Steps

The pan-Ayrshire programme aspect will continue in its development phase, including the development of BDC adoption grant.

The three local authorities will continue the development of the host site business cases with the aim of merging business cases as soon as possible. The benefits derived through the programme will be identified through the business case and economic modelling development.

The Year Ahead

Continued Momentum

As the report shows, from April 2025 to March 2026, the Ayrshire Growth Deal has made significant progress across key projects, overcoming a series of challenges. Strengthened partnership working has been central to this progress. All Partners recognise the need to continue to deliver at pace to ensure success in the delivery of the Deal, and look forward to pushing further to build on existing collaboration and momentum.

As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that key sectors in Ayrshire have seen promising developments, laying the groundwork for future job creation and stronger local economies. Investment in skills and inclusive growth is helping Ayrshire become more competitive and address regional inequalities.

Looking ahead, the AGD remains focused on delivering results, responding effectively to new and existing challenges, and ensuring the region benefits fully from ongoing and future projects. The next year will prioritise the pace of progression, maximising the impact of current investments and strengthening collaboration across all partners.

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Further information



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Community Renewable Energy Project (CoRE)			
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i3 Flexible Space			
International Marine Science and Environment Centre (IMSE)			
Hunterston Strategic Development Area			
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Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund			
Community Wealth Building			
Building Digital Capital			

Glossary

AGD	Ayrshire Growth Deal
AMIC	Ayrshire Manufacturing Investment Corridor
AREP	Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership
ASTAC	Aerospace and Space Technology Application Centre (ASTAC)
ASIF	Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BRP	Benefits Realisation Plan
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CoRE	Community Renewable Energy project
COVID	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CPI	Centre for Process Innovation
CWB	Community Wealth Building
DPMC	Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre
EAC	East Ayrshire Council
EASA	European Union Aviation Safety Agency
FBC	Full Business Case
GPA	Glasgow Prestwick Airport
IMSE	International Marine Science and Environmental Centre
LSO	Launch Service Operator
LSP	Launch Service Providers
MMIC	Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRO	Maintenance, Repair and Operations

NAC	North Ayrshire Council
NHS	National Health Service
NMIS	National Manufacturing Institute Scotland
NPF3	Third National Planning Framework
OBC	Outline Business Case
PMO	Programme Management Office for AGD
R&D	Research and Development
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RSIP	Regional Skills Investment Plan
SAC	South Ayrshire Council
SAMH	Scottish Association for Mental Health
SAV	Strategic Added Value
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SE	Scottish Enterprise
SMAS	Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service
SPEN	Scottish Power Energy Networks
STAG	Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STPR2	Second Strategic Transport Projects Review
TACT	The Ayrshire Community Trust
TRLs	Technology Readiness Levels
TSA	Technology Safeguards Agreement
UKG	UK Government
UKSA	UK Space Agency

