



A Strategic Review

by Tracy Gilbert MP



From Potential to Prosperity

Unlocking Economic Growth
in Edinburgh North & Leith

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Foreword

Tracy Gilbert MP

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As the Scottish Labour Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith, it will be of no surprise to anyone that my key priority is to reduce the unacceptable level of poverty in my constituency and across Edinburgh.

Prior to my election in July 2024, I worked in Local Government which led me to a career as a trade union leader. As Regional Secretary of USDAW, the Union for Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers in Scotland, I represented USDAW members across the country and worked with hundreds of successful private sector companies of all sizes in both good and bad times to deliver secure employment in communities across Scotland.

I fully understand that to tackle the multi-faceted issue of poverty in Edinburgh North and Leith we need to deliver a well-paid, high skilled workforce and crucially ensure that local people have the skills to compete. That is the quickest and most sustainable way to ensure that everyone in Edinburgh North and Leith has the opportunity to not only participate in what our city has to offer but to thrive.



Introduction

Edinburgh is a global city which is influenced at the UK-level by macroeconomic factors and global market dynamics, as well as overarching monetary and fiscal policies and the national industrial strategy. Alongside these factors sit local and regional economic development strategies from devolved and local governments.

Tracy Gilbert MP commissioned research on the opportunities available to Edinburgh North and Leith to secure high-skilled jobs and ensure local people benefit from them. If local people do not have the skills needed for the economic opportunities available, then adequate and, if required, tailored support must be put in place.

The commissioned research was first designed to analyse the policy landscape and then identify the opportunities. This summary of the research firstly sets out the complex policy landscape before identifying the key sectors where opportunities are available and the key demographics who are most at risk of being furthest away from the labour market, who need support into the workplace and/or into the jobs of the future.

External Review

There are existing regional economic strategies such as the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, phases of City Region delivery and proposals for targeted housing investment as well as more broad plans for a second City-Region deal and the underlying innovation-centric economic investment required which complements existing government initiatives in the region such as the Forth Green Freeport.

At the UK level we should maintain alignment and understanding of departmental strategies beyond the Forth Green Freeport including the Department for Business and Trade's Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology AI Opportunities Action Plan, and follow on work such as AI Growth Zones, as well as the Department for Work and Pensions Get Britain Working paper to understand implications for support for economically inactive people to get into work.

Due to the devolved nature of many aspects of this work, we must also seek to align with the goals of Scottish government activity from the Withers Review, Logan Review and Stewart Review. These are

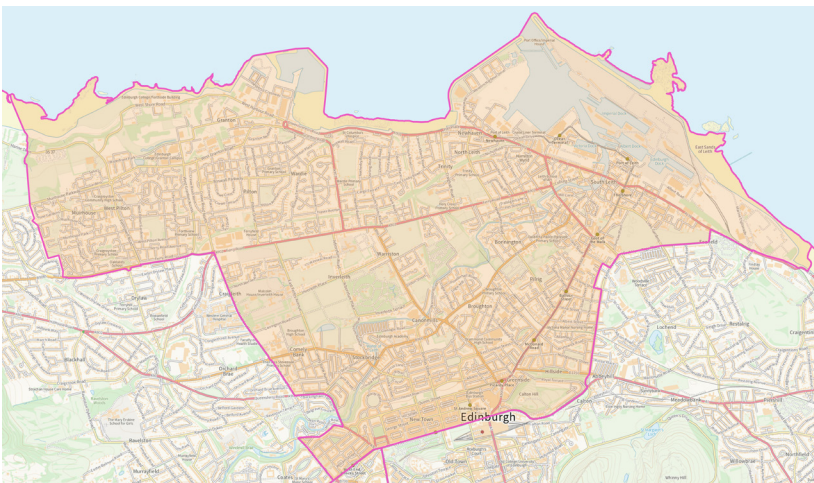
ongoing in their implementation and present useful research on intersectional barriers to employment, both from a traditional workforce standpoint and that of entrepreneurs.

There has been vital work done by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to assess and understand poverty and its implications, mitigations and interventions. The organisation Our Scottish Future has also delivered a paper which assesses the scaled routes to growth on a Scotland-wide level, how we can alter our economic model to tackle poverty and deliver economic growth through political leadership from UK and Scottish government to break down silos.



Tracy Gilbert MP has met with key stakeholders in the development of this paper. Each recognise the need for coordinating action and delivering impetus for economic inclusion through skills opportunities for both hard to reach people and transition industries. It is important to note that there will

continue to be strategic policy developed and implemented by stakeholders which will impact upon the delivery of the programme. The external review should therefore be considered a work in progress.



Above: Approximate boundary of the Edinburgh North and Leith constituency.



Economic Opportunities

Port-Related activity

The Port of Leith represents one of the most significant physical and economic assets in the constituency. The port was a key part of Scotland's oil and gas operation for decades but has now been transformed into the largest Renewables Hub in the UK. There has already been significant investment deployed on the site which makes it ready to support the transition from fossil fuels to clean power. The site can support green shipping, offshore wind logistics and green manufacturing.

An opportunity already exists as the physical investment has been complete and is complimented by wider Forth Green Free Port SEED capital funding, which is now being deployed.

There is existing interest from potential manufacturers and others which in turn creates high skilled, high paid job opportunities.



Economic Opportunities

Creative industries

The constituency has a long-standing cultural identity and is home to a dynamic creative ecosystem of designers, artists, musicians and social enterprises. These industries offer flexible pathways into employment particularly for young people, freelancers and under-represented groups.

There is already existing cultural capital and community buy-in with further significant projects already underway. The creative industries synergies with ambitions around tourism, digital innovation and community regeneration.

A focus on realising the economic opportunities of the creative industries provides further benefits in building place making, supporting entrepreneur-ism and increasing Edinburgh, Scotland's and the UK's soft power.



Economic Opportunities

Hospitality



Hospitality is a cornerstone of the local area's economy, providing accessible employment opportunities. The Sector faces a number of financial challenges following the COVID pandemic but still employs a significant number of local people.

With there being a high demand of workers and an existing employer base there are opportunities to raise the quality of jobs and create career

pathways. By maximising opportunities from tourism, we can also create new customers for the hospitality sector.

Key Demographics

To tackle the poverty experienced by too many people across Edinburgh North and Leith, the benefits of economic development need to be experienced by everyone. By ensuring that targeted support is in place to support demographics currently furthest from the labour market we can increase the size of the labour market, fix skills shortages and tackle poverty for the long term.

A number of key demographics have been identified in Edinburgh North and Leith who

need targeted interventions to support re-engagement and fulfilment in the labour market.



Key Demographics

Women

Women remain disproportionately affected by pay gaps, occupational segregation and under-representation in high growth sectors. Data from the Office of National Statistics shows that there is a £86.70 difference in the gross weekly pay of men and women in Scotland, while data also shows that 92.9% of men in Edinburgh North and Leith are economically active compared to 83.1% of women.

We also know that women are still more likely to bear the brunt of caring responsibilities either over a short period of time or on an on-going basis, which disrupts their engagement in the labour market.

There are significant opportunities as employers are increasingly deploying flexible and hybrid models of work, and increasing the number of women in the workplace has a direct positive correlation with increasing household incomes.

Key Demographics

New Scots and English as a Second Language

Edinburgh North and Leith attracts new Scots from across the globe to settle here. Edinburgh College identifies ESOL as the top barrier to economic participation. Many individuals have skills and qualifications that are not recognised or fully utilised due to language gaps.

There is already a strong existing ESOL programme and community organisations that are experts in their field. Ending this language barrier

is arguably the quickest way to close the skills gaps that exist by making sure we're utilising existing talent.

Key Demographics

Transition Industry Workers

People working in declining or transitioning industries (oil and gas, traditional retail, some manufacturing) are at increased risk of economic dislocation. Many are in work at present but face long-term insecurity without intervention.

There is a clear opportunity to work with an already motivated cohort of the labour market who have transferable skills. This is already a priority area for the Government with a number of interventions including the Energy Skills Passport and

digital skills work to ensure workers have the skills for the jobs of the future. Securing further interventions which help protect the local area from long-term economic exclusion.



Key Demographics

Young People

We are living at a time when more young people are not in employment, education or training than ever before. Young people in Edinburgh North and Leith face a variety of barriers to entering and progressing in the workplace, including a lack of accessible training pathways, limited exposure to local and emerging industries and a mismatch between qualifications and local job markets needs. Early intervention and investment aimed at young people not only addresses immediate economic inactivity but also shapes the long-term trajectory of the local economy.

There are significant opportunities for Edinburgh North and Leith with strong local institutions such as Edinburgh College, universities and local employability services. In addition, there is opportunities to expand apprenticeship, internship and mentoring schemes across key growth sectors.

By focusing on young people, we can build a future-proof workforce and reduce long term scarring for young people currently not engaging in the labour market. This is also a key focus area of the UK Government as they look to support the 12.7% of young people across the UK who are not currently in employment, education or training into a positive destination.



Making the change

As an MP, Tracy Gilbert, has met with a number of stakeholders in key growth sectors who are actively investing and/or have economic opportunities on the horizon. She has also invested in research to document the current policy landscape and identify the enablers and opportunities for change.



There are a number of Government interventions which Edinburgh North and Leith can benefit and make use of, but it is also clear that a joined-up local approach could create significant additional

local opportunities and help reduce poverty and inequality over the short and long term.



As an MP, Tracy can convene local stakeholders, support the development of a joined up approach with local partners and make the case for investment from existing or future Government funding sources.

Edinburgh North and Leith has a unique opportunity to evidence what can be achieved when businesses, educational facilities and politics align for the good of our community. To make this possible we need deeds not words. We are seeking active partners who can help realise the aspiration to reduce poverty in Edinburgh North and Leith by

delivering high skilled, high paid jobs and supporting local people to engage with those jobs.

Tracy Gilbert MP is keen to hear from any partner or stakeholder who can help realise this ambition, by recognising we can achieve even more by working together in partnership.



References

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