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A Message from the Chair..

Welcome to the August 2026 edition of the SLAED newsletter.

The SLAED Executive has been working over the summer to develop SLAED's priorities for action. Two face-to-face meetings were held in June and August to discuss the challenges facing local authority economic development and agree what actions SLAED can take to support some of the key issues.

Along with COSLA officers who sit on the SLAED Executive Group, we welcomed additional senior COSLA colleagues to the meetings, with constructive discussions reinforcing alignment and complementarity across our shared priorities.

From the discussions, three priority areas of focus were developed for SLAED to take forward in 2026/27:

1. Influence the Regional and National Economic Development Agenda -

SLAED will ensure that it is represented in the development of the regional agenda and the views of local authorities are effectively communicated to influence emerging policy.

2. Align Economic Development Around Key Sectors and Growth Priorities -

SLAED activity will be aligned with UK and Scottish Government growth agendas, recognising that future government funding is likely to be strongly linked to economic growth and productivity.

3. Protect and Strengthen Local Authority Economic Development Services -

SLAED will champion the value of local authority-led economic development services, demonstrating the contribution made towards national growth and the delivery of national outcomes.

A key part of SLAED's role is to communicate, promote and influence, therefore these priority areas will be taken forward through the new SLAED Communications Plan along with the ongoing work of the SLAED Executive and subgroups.

Ishabel Bremner, SLAED Chair



SLAED Indicator Framework 2024/25 Highlight Report

A Highlight Report has recently been published for the 2024/25 SLAED Indicator Framework. This report highlights some of the key economic indicators from the SLAED framework along with local authority case studies.

It replaces the previous Annual SLAED Indicator Framework Report which provided a comprehensive overview of the 39 measures within the SLAED Framework. Instead, the Highlight Report directs readers to the new SLAED Dashboard, where users can access and interrogate data relevant to them. Further Thematic Reports will be published throughout the year, focusing on areas such as Business, Employability and Economy and Wellbeing.

The [Highlight Report](#) and [Dashboard](#) are both available on the SLAED website.

Data for 2025/26 is currently being submitted and as soon as all local authorities have provided their data, this will be added to the Dashboard.

If you have any feedback or comments on the Indicator Framework Report or Dashboard, please get in touch with slaed@improvementservice.org.uk.



Community Wealth Building Update

The Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 20 March 2025, passed unanimously by Scottish Ministers and became an act on 25 March 2026. The Act creates a strategic foundation for community wealth building in Scotland.

A briefing on the CWB (Scotland) Act 2026 is available on the Improvement Service website, [here](#).

The Improvement Service is working in partnership with EDAS to develop the resources available through the [CWB Centre for Excellence](#). If there is work happening locally that should be shared as best practice through case-studies, please get in touch to add to the [bank of case-studies](#).

If you are looking for support preparing a CWB Action Plan, please get in touch with Mia Duncan, CWB Project Officer (mia.duncan@improvementservice.org.uk) to hear about resources and bespoke support available to local authorities.

Community Wealth Building Practitioners Network Update

The CWB Practitioners Network has welcomed a new chair, Paul Morris, Economic Strategy Officer at Clackmannanshire Council.

The CWB Practitioners Network's next meeting in August will focus on House Building and CWB.

The network subgroups continue to work on:

1. Measures and indicators group: finalising a measurement framework based on a logic model developed by the group.
2. Action Plans group: developed a briefing on different partnership governance arrangements and awaits further direction to support CWB guidance development.

An updated Mapping of CWB Implementation for 2026 across the network is underway with results to be shared with the network in a refreshed format.

Upcoming topics the network will be considering include:

- Regional approaches and CWB
- Consortium co-ops and procurement
- Good Food Nations and CWB



Supporting parental journeys into employment

As part of the most recent Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan – [Bringing Hope, Building Futures](#) – Local Employability Partnerships were awarded a share of £19m Transport to Employment funding.

With £10m awarded to Regional Transport Partnerships to develop infrastructure solutions, the additional £9m awarded to LEPs was to address the accessibility, affordability and availability of transport as a barrier to low-income parents in accessing support, training or employment.

As the lead accountable body for these funds, local authority employability teams have been working flat out to bring partners together to develop a series of innovative solutions and test and learn projects aimed at addressing these challenges.

From providing travel passes to allow parents to take part in valuable employability support and vocational training, to working with community transport partners to provide additional routes, to supporting rural travel solutions such as first and last mile journeys, the activities taking place over the course of this year will help remove one of the barriers to accessing training and employment for many parents.

On top of the £40m Parental Employability Support and additional Transport to Employment funds made available through the delivery plan, were several other funds which support the wider employability system.

These included £4.2m to strengthen NHS infrastructure to provide paid work placements, £9m to the college sector to support parents to gain skills and £15m to support parents from the priority families to enter and sustain employment.

For further information contact Susie Donkin, Employability Partnership Manager susie.donkin@improvementservice.org.uk



New research highlights economic and social importance of tackling bus congestion

Glasgow's Urban Big Data Centre have published new research commissioned by First Bus showing Scotland's urban economies are losing valuable time and productivity because of growing congestion impacting key bus routes.

The report estimates that delays on certain key Glasgow corridors are costing passengers around 1.2 million hours every year, with a wider economic impact valued at approximately £24 million annually. While the study focuses on Glasgow, the findings will resonate with local authority teams across Scotland facing similar pressures around transport reliability, labour mobility and city-centre accessibility.

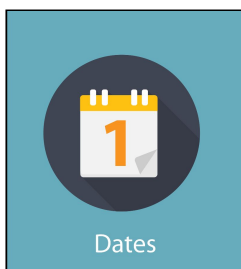
Researchers identified congestion hotspots where peak-time journey times can increase by up to 40%, undermining access to employment, education, healthcare and retail destinations. The report also highlights the knock-on effects for employers, including recruitment and retention challenges caused by unreliable transport links.

The study argues that improving bus journey times should be viewed not solely as a transport issue, but as part of a broader economic growth strategy. Among the interventions highlighted in the report are dedicated bus lanes, bus gates and traffic signal priority measures, alongside stronger partnership working between operators, councils and transport agencies.

Evidence from Aberdeen, for example, demonstrates how targeted bus priority measures can improve punctuality and reduce journey times, following the introduction of bus gates in 2023. The report concludes that more reliable public transport networks could support cleaner air, improved connectivity and stronger economic performance across Scotland's cities and economic centres.

A full copy of the report can be found at: [The Price of Bus Delays in Glasgow: An economic valuation of bus passenger time lost due to congestion in Glasgow](#) or contact Paul Mullan (paul.mullan@firstbus.co.uk) for further information.

(Image shows: Andrew Cullen, Regional Director of First Bus in Scotland)



SLAED Groups

SLAED has the following Executive, strategic and thematic groups. You can find out more about each group on the [SLAED website](#).

- Executive Group - meets every 4 weeks
- Performance Group - meets quarterly
- Business Group - meets monthly
- Funding Group - meets quarterly
- People Group - meets every 4 weeks
- Tourism Group - meets bi-monthly
- Rural Group - meets bi-monthly

If you would like to join any of the groups, please contact slaed@improvementservice.org.uk



Get in Touch

We're keen to hear from SLAED members. Please get in touch with any:

- suggestions of topics or guest speakers for any of the SLAED network meetings
- news and updates from your area for inclusion in the SLAED newsletter
- case studies for inclusion in SLAED publications and reports.

Contact: slaed@improvementservice.org.uk