

# FALKIRK

## Local Development Plan



## Technical Report 1: Monitoring Statement

November 2011



**Falkirk Council**

# Falkirk Local Development Plan

## Technical Report 1

### Monitoring Statement

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Falkirk Local Development Plan (LDP) will replace the existing development plan for the local authority area when it is adopted in 2014. It will be a new all purpose plan which combines the strategic and local functions of the existing plans, the Falkirk Council Structure Plan and the Falkirk Council Local Plan.
- 1.2 Under Section 16 of the Planning, etc, (Scotland) Act the planning authority must publish a Monitoring Statement alongside the Main Issues Report of the LDP. Guidance provided in Circular 1/2009 states that the principal functions of the Monitoring Statement are to:
  - Monitor changes in principal characteristics of the area (physical, economic, social and environmental)
  - Monitor impact of policies and proposals of the existing plan(s)
- 1.3 Guidance further suggests that the Monitoring Statement should focus on the wider impact of the plan on area and population wide indicators and on how far objectives and vision of previous plan have been realised. The Monitoring Report is intended to provide one way of identifying the issues to be taken forward in the Main Issues Report.
- 1.4 The Falkirk Council Structure Plan was first approved in 2002 and was quickly followed by an Alteration, eventually approved in 2007. The Structure Plan sets out the vision and development strategy for the Falkirk Council area up to 2020. The first Structure Plan approval date of 2002 forms the baseline for the content of this Monitoring Statement.
- 1.5 The Falkirk Council Local Plan (FCLP) has only recently been adopted, in December 2010, but its main priorities and focus was established in 2005 when the first Finalised Draft of the plan was published. The FCLP translated the broad policies and proposals of the Structure Plan to the local level and provides a detailed policy framework for day to day planning decisions.
- 1.6 The Council has published annual Development Plan Monitoring Reports since 2003, initially confined to monitoring the progress of the Structure Plan. However since 2006 these monitoring reports have tracked the progress of the area's demographics and economic and environmental trends through monitoring policy areas of both the Structure Plan and FCLP. A range of 44 monitoring indicators were identified across the policy areas of both plans and the evidence gathered through the annual monitoring reports informs much of this Monitoring Statement.
- 1.7 In line with the previous monitoring reports the main part of this Monitoring Statement will be structured according to the four strategic themes of the Structure and Local Plans; Sustaining Communities, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Quality and Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure. However it is appropriate to first set out the principal physical and demographic characteristics of the area, through which the area's recent development can be understood.

## **2 The area's geography, demography and economy**

- 2.1 With a land area of 297 sq. km, Falkirk Council occupies a generally diamond shaped area located at the heart of central Scotland, at the axis of both east-west and north-south strategic road and railway links. Despite its relatively small geographical extent, the area's landscape exhibits great variety. The northern part is characterised by the relatively flat agricultural carseland adjoining the Forth Estuary. To the east a rolling landscape of good quality agricultural land is bisected by the scenic Avon valley. The centre of the area, which is predominantly urbanised, sits in the river valleys of the Carron and the Bonny Water, and is traversed by the historical engineering features of the Roman Antonine Wall and the Georgian Forth and Clyde, and Union Canals. To the south the land rises sharply up to the more remote and less populous Slamannan Plateau and to the west rises into the Denny and Kilsyth Hills.
- 2.2 The population of 153,280 (2010) is distributed around a network of small to medium sized towns. The principal town of Falkirk is centrally located and serves as the main shopping, service and employment centre for the area. Closely surrounding Falkirk, but separated from it by narrow corridors of Green Belt, are the urban areas of Larbert/Stenhousemuir, Polmont and Grangemouth. The former two are largely residential in character, whilst Grangemouth is home to the largest petrochemical complex in Scotland, as well as a major port on the River Forth. Together these main settlements form a mini-conurbation of around 100,000 people. In the western reaches of the area lie the settlements of Denny/Dunipace, Bonnybridge and Banknock, whilst to the east, overlooking the Forth, sits the town of Bo'ness. Some 18 smaller village communities are scattered across the rural part of the area.
- 2.3 The area played a key and early role in the industrial revolution in Scotland, with the founding of the Carron Iron Works in 1759, and the economy was traditionally based around coal mining and the iron castings industry. Manufacturing still plays an important role in the area, particularly the chemicals and petrochemicals sector at Grangemouth, but the service sector, both private and public, is now predominant. The area's excellent communication links also means that an increasing number of people commute outwith the area to work in the surrounding urban centres as well as the two main cities of Scotland.

## **3 Development Strategy of Falkirk Council Structure Plan**

- 3.1 The development strategy of the Structure Plan is 'Promoting Sustainable Growth in All Our Communities'. This was devised to address a number of issues prevalent in the late 1990s and envisaged:
- Reversing the trend of declining population
  - Regenerating an economy vulnerable to contraction in its still significant manufacturing sector
  - Strengthening local community identity
  - improving the overall image of the area by addressing the negative aspects of the local environment and promoting the area's natural and built heritage assets

- 3.2 The Council's aspiration is to significantly advance and re-brand the Falkirk Council area by 2020 in economic, environmental and social terms. Therefore, the strategy:
- **Provides for population and economic growth**, so that the vitality and profile of the area as a whole is maintained and strengthened.
  - **Distributes growth amongst the different settlements**, having regard to their physical and environmental capacity and social and economic needs, in order to ensure their future viability and a healthy level of self-containment.
  - **Promotes major strategic economic development at selected mixed use development opportunities**, which are, or can be made, easily accessible by public transport and will stimulate economic growth in jobs and competitiveness.
  - **Identifies, protects and enhances the area's key environmental assets**, requiring new development to conserve these assets and to attain a consistently higher level of design quality than has hitherto been achieved in the area.
  - **Ensures that growth is realistic and achievable**, social and physical infrastructure requirements having been assessed and mechanisms for securing their provision put in place.
- 3.3 This Monitoring Statement attempts to measure how far the Development Strategy has been achieved, using the evidence built up through the annual Monitoring Reports. It is worth pointing out that 2010 is only half way through the time period of the Structure Plan strategy and therefore it is unrealistic to expect substantial progress to have been achieved on all fronts. Nevertheless where there have been shortfalls in elements of the strategy this will be highlighted as an issue to be addressed in the new LDP.

## 4 Sustaining Communities

### Population Growth and Distribution

- 4.1 The Structure Plan 2007 set a population target of 152,000 for the year 2020. This revised the target originally set in the 2002 plan upwards from 146,000, as this target had proved to be too modest in the light of growth in the early part of the decade. Indeed by the time the first Structure Plan was published in 2002 the population trend was already on an upward curve. As was intimated in section 2 the most up to date (mid-2010) population estimate for the area is 153,280. Table 4.1 shows the population rise since 2001, amounting to 8,010 or around 5.5% over the period 2001-10, higher than the Scottish average growth rate.
- 4.2 Thus the 2020 population target has already been achieved in less than half the time originally expected. This represents the most significant success of the sustainable growth strategy.
- 4.3 Over the period of the original Structure Plan (base 1997), the population of the Council area has been increasing by almost 750 per annum. This represents a significant increase on the expected rise of 500 per annum upon which the target population was set. While this is largely due to rather higher levels of net in-migration than was predicted, it is also partly due to an increase in the birth rate in recent years.

- 4.4 This higher than expected population growth has been spread across almost all of the 8 settlement areas of the Council as shown in table 4.2.

**Table 4.1 Population Growth 2001-10**

Year	Population	Increase over previous year
2001	145,270	
2002	145,560	+ 290
2003	145,920	+ 360
2004	147,460	+ 1,540
2005	149,150	+ 1,690
2006	149,680	+ 530
2007	150,720	+ 1,040
2008	151,570	+ 850
2009	152,480	+910
2010	153,280	+800

Source: GROS, Crown copyright

**Table 4.2 Population Growth in Settlements**

Local Plan area	2001 Census	2008 mid-year estimate	Change (no.)	Change (%)
Banknock & Bonnybridge	10,584	12,437	+ 1,853	+ 17.5%
Bo'ness	14,037	14,458	+ 421	+ 3.0%
Denny	13,173	13,575	+ 402	+ 3.1%
Falkirk	35,979	37,659	+ 1,680	+ 4.7%
Grangemouth	17,906	16,827	- 1,079	- 6.0%
Larbert/ Stenhousemuir	22,421	23,577	+ 1,156	+ 5.2%
Polmont	20,002	21,530	+ 1,528	+ 7.6%
Rural North	2,422	2,824	+ 402	+ 16.6%
Rural South	8,667	8,683	+ 16	+ 0.2%

Source: Falkirk Council Research and Information Unit

- 4.5 Only in Grangemouth has there been no growth, and in fact decline, due to the severely restricted scope for attracting population through new housing development in the area. Rates of growth have varied markedly between settlements and range from a very modest 0.2% in Rural South to 17.5% in Bonnybridge/Banknock. Thus there has been varied success in achieving growth across all the Council's communities.

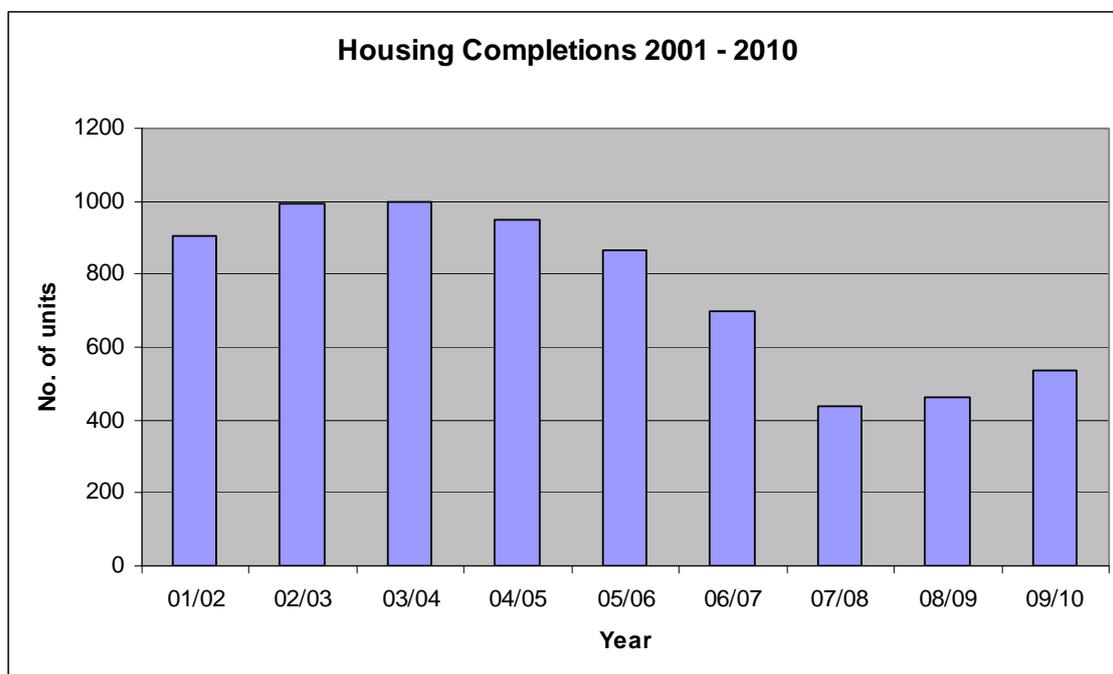
#### House Completions

- 4.6 Achieving the target population of 152,000 in 2020 was predicated on increasing the housing stock by 13,800 houses in the period 2001-2020. Up to mid 2009 -10 a total of 6,847 houses were completed across the council area. This was achieved during a period of unprecedented developer activity with some years showing completion rates of almost 1,000 units, as shown in table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3 Total House Completions per Annum**

Year	Total	Sites of 4+	Small sites
2001/02	903	878	21
2002/03	995	972	20
2003/04	999	992	19
2004/05	950	921	25
2005/06	865	852	17
2006/07	696	712	8
2007/08	439	429	7
2008/09	464	417	9
2009/10	536	493	19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6,847</b>	<b>6,702</b>	<b>145</b>

Source: Falkirk Council, Planning and Environment/ Research & Information Units



- 4.7 From a high tide of 999 completions in 2003/4 the trend was already downwards before the ‘credit crunch’ hit the house building industry in 2007/8. Since then completions per annum have been considerably lower than in the early part of the decade, although still respectable compared to some earlier periods such as the late 1990s and mid 1980s.
- 4.8 The total completions up to 2009/10 were achieved at an average rate of 758 per annum. Compared to the annual average figure of 726 requirement of the Structure Plan this shows completions are on target, at this point, roughly half way in the Structure Plan cycle. However with completions in recent years being well below that figure this picture may well deteriorate.
- 4.9 The Falkirk Council Local Plan provides sufficient housing allocations to meet the Structure Plan 2020 target, but there is uncertainty as to whether build rates can pick up to the levels required to deliver this growth by 2020.

- 4.10 In tandem with the local variation in population increase the distribution of new house building varies widely across the Council area, as shown in table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4 House completions by Settlement Area 2001-2010**

Area	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Totals
Bo'ness	83	175	116	48	33	58	17	73	12	615
B'bridge/Banknock	113	169	142	151	47	115	63	39	31	870
Denny	30	114	129	130	118	19	21	21	11	593
Falkirk	178	189	227	319	313	274	72	86	86	1744
Grangemouth	48	16	21	6	0	0	1	2	105	199
Larbert/Sten'muir	178	152	163	69	147	138	179	170	115	1311
Polmont	177	115	140	153	137	55	70	64	151	1062
Rural N	67	51	56	66	58	1	0	0	0	299
Rural S	29	14	5	8	12	36	16	9	25	154

Source: Falkirk Council Planning and Environment Unit

- 4.11 Prior to the current development plan cycle most development in the Council area was concentrated in the Falkirk, Larbert/Stenhousemuir and Polmont settlement areas. The development strategy of encouraging growth across the whole area has borne fruit insofar as growth has become more evenly spread, with areas like Bonnybridge/Banknock showing greater activity than in previous periods. Only Grangemouth and Rural South have exhibited relatively low activity levels.

#### Affordable Housing

- 4.12 An issue which has developed through the lifetime of the plan has been the response to housing need and the provision of affordable housing. At the beginning of the monitoring period in 2002 there was no identified affordable housing need in the area and the policies in the plans were aspirational rather than prescriptive. Falkirk council area was (and still is) a relatively cheap area to buy in, compared to neighbouring areas like Stirling and West Lothian.
- 4.13 The buoyant housing market of the middle part of the decade created a housing need problem, as average house prices rose ahead of the ability of those on lower incomes to pay. To a large degree the policy response has played catch-up. An affordable housing needs policy which requires percentage contributions of affordable units on mainstream sites was only approved in 2007. The subsequent recession has resulted in no output to date from the policy, and affordable provision has been overwhelmingly provided by RSLs using the traditional public funding mechanisms on publicly owned sites. The annual output is shown below:

**Table 4.5 Output of Affordable Housing**

2001-2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	TOTAL
106	113	16	15	26	73	8	74	149	579

Source: Falkirk Council Corporate & Neighbourhood Services

### Strategic Investment for Residential-led Renewal

- 4.14 The Alteration to the Structure Plan in 2007 introduced additional areas for housing growth in the form of the four Strategic Initiatives for Residential-led Regeneration at Banknock, Bo'ness Foreshore, Slamannan and Whitecross. Together they are expected to provide space for at least 2,800 houses. All of these locations have complex infrastructure issues to overcome and progress has been slower than originally anticipated, particularly due to the economic downturn and their size and complexity. However, three out of the four have committed developers and have progressed to planning application stage in whole or part. They are still expected to deliver growth and regeneration, but potentially at a slower rate than previously anticipated.

### Community Infrastructure

- 4.15 One of the key considerations for the development strategy was the impact of growth on community and physical infrastructure. The population growth has put pressure on community infrastructure in particular localities and new facilities have not always been delivered in tandem with the housing. Nevertheless considerable progress has been made with some types of provision, particularly in education, a service which is closely affected by population growth. Most schools in the area have experienced a growth in pupil numbers and some have had considerable pressure to expand.
- 4.16 Major investment in the schools estate has taken place, including replacement of four secondary schools and a primary school, the construction of a new primary school, and various primary school extensions. Developer contributions to the upgrading of school infrastructure have been significant although by no means sufficient.
- 4.17 Provision of major new health facilities in the community to match population growth has been patchy, with a new health centre opened in Airth, and one extended in Polmont. However in other communities there is a perception that local facilities are being stretched and further investment by the Primary Care Trust can be anticipated. At the strategic level the major new investment in health is the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, recently opened in July 2010, designed to cater for acute health needs and replacing both Falkirk and Stirling Royal Infirmarys.

Issues: Can a development strategy of growth be sustained? How should the next plan address the downturn in developer activity? Can the provision of community infrastructure better match the rate of house completions?
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## **5 Economic prosperity**

### Business land

- 5.1 The promotion of business and industry has been focussed on the nine Strategic Development Opportunities (SDOs) designated in the plans – Falkirk Town Centre, Grangemouth Docks, Grangemouth Industry/Kinneil Kerse, Falkirk Gateway, Falkirk Canal Interchange, North Larbert/Glenbervie,

Gilston, Langlees/Bainsford, and Whitecross Manuel Works. These locations were chosen to be the key drivers for the economic regeneration of the area and are critical land use components in delivering the 'My Future's in Falkirk' economic development strategy.

- 5.2 During the monitoring period employment prospects in general were very good in Falkirk Council area, with the number of people in employment reaching record high levels and unemployment rates at record low levels. After the recession took hold in 2008, these indices have gone into reverse.
- 5.3 The ability of planning policy to have direct influence on these macro-economic trends is negligible and against that background the development of the Strategic Development Opportunities has been patchy. The vast bulk of employment opportunities have arisen in existing premises in existing business locations.
- 5.4 While a number of the SDOs have yet to experience any physical development on the ground, most have progressed to having firm proposals with or without planning consent, as detailed below

**Table 5.1 Progress at Strategic Development Opportunities**

<b>Falkirk town centre:</b> no new floorspace (except change from In-shops to Debenhams) but considerable investment in new outlets and likely rise in job numbers
<b>Grangemouth docks:</b> some new warehouse space created, investment in new cranes and reorganisation of operational area; latest proposals include wind turbines and biomass power plant; area now part of National Development site
<b>Grangemouth industry/Kinneil Kerse:</b> continuing activity at various firms like Ineos and Calachem (Earls Gate Park); no development at Kinneil Kerse site which no longer requires to be nationally safeguarded
<b>Falkirk Gateway:</b> no development but Council minded to grant outline consent for mixed use retail/office development subject to S75 agreement
<b>North Larbert/Glenbervie:</b> some investment at Central Business Park, call centre and police office opened with new jobs; Glenbervie site remains empty; new acute hospital opened in August 2010 with commensurate increase in jobs within the council area
<b>Falkirk Canal Interchange/Tamfourhill:</b> at Falkirk Wheel investment in visitor facilities and expansion of boat excursion programme provides 60 jobs in peak season; at Tamfourhill no development yet but Council minded to grant consent for mixed use housing, business and leisure development subject to S75 agreement
<b>Langlees/Bainsford:</b> Asda depot and wash facility created with 300+ jobs; Alcan works cleared and roads and services provided at Abbotsford Business Park
<b>Gilston:</b> outline consent granted on appeal (subject to S75 agreement) for mixed use business and leisure development
<b>Manuel Works:</b> Council minded to grant consent for new community covering Whitecross and Manuel Works, with 10ha business component

- 5.5 The vast bulk of businesses in the council area occupy existing business land and the development plan has contained policies to retain much of this land in business use while providing flexibility to introduce other uses on less suitable locations. Monitoring of application activity since 2006 suggests that more

business land has been redeveloped for other uses than has been taken up for business and industry, a consequence of the higher returns on land uses such as housing, during the boom time. The mixed fortunes of the policies on promoting business land suggest that the focus of these policies needs to be reviewed through the new LDP.

### Retailing

- 5.6 In regard to retailing the Development Plan has supported policies for developing the district centres (Bo'ness, Denny, Grangemouth and Stenhousemuir) to retain expenditure more locally, while preventing further foodstore expansion in Falkirk. These policies have met with success where they have been implemented. Thus new superstores in Grangemouth and Stenhousemuir, have recaptured custom from Falkirk since the new stores have opened. In contrast Denny and Bo'ness still leak custom elsewhere in the absence of any substantial floorspace expansion. In 2010 a further superstore opened in Redding, in support of policy to increase retail floorspace serving the Polmont/Braes settlement area. Only in late 2010 was the strategy set aside when consent was granted for a new superstore in Camelon, within the Falkirk catchment.
- 5.7 The 2009 household survey and 2010 retail floorspace survey have provided an up-to-date picture of retail provision and shopping patterns in the area and provided good comparative data with 2004 and 1999 on floorspace and usage respectively, since the retail strategy was effected. In terms of floorspace there has been an increase overall, principally in convenience provision through the new foodstores indicated above. Services floorspace has risen considerably since 2004 but comparison floorspace in total has remained static. Vacancy levels have also risen, likely due to recession in the last couple of years.
- 5.8 While retaining its predominant role in the council area due to the popularity of the adjacent Central Retail Park, Falkirk Town Centre has nevertheless lost ground to regional rivals such as Stirling and Livingston as evidenced by national league tables of retail activity. Future policy should rebalance the focus of attention to Falkirk Town Centre, to determine what opportunities exist for change, improvement and investment.

### Leisure and Tourism

- 5.9 On leisure and tourism there has been a major step change with the opening of the Falkirk Wheel, now recognised as a national attraction. Summer visitor numbers have held up well since its opening season of 2003, with a peak of over 67,000 visitors per month in its first summer season being replicated in 2007 and 2009. In other pursuits progress has been more modest - the policy portfolio is about support for tourism and directing new development to appropriate locations. Thus although the number of budget hotels in the council area had expanded to 6 by 2010 their location has been unrelated to the locational criteria issues in the relevant policies.

Issue: Is the current focus of policy supportive of development in the business, retail and tourism sectors?
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## 6 Environmental Quality

- 6.1 The theme of environmental quality is covered by a wide range of policies and indicators in the Structure and Local Plans and an attempt has been made here to group these into related sub-themes.

### Green Network

- 6.2 One of the most visually evident changes in the area over the development plan period (and predating that from the 1990s) has been the 'greening' of the urban fringes. In pursuit of the aims of Central Scotland Forest Trust and the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative, and using various programmes such as Woodland In and Around Towns (WIAT) over 650,000 trees have been planted since 2001, increasing the area of tree cover by around 300 ha. Tree planting activity was at its height in the early to mid 'noughties' but has since declined, as shown in table 6.1 (covering the period since 1997)

**Table 6.1 Tree planting**

year	ha planted	no. of trees
1997	91	227,500
1998	64	160,000
1999	58.5	146,250
2000	54	135,000
2001	24	60,000
2002	19.5	48,750
2003	68	170,000
2004	64	160,000
2005	29.5	59,114
2006	22.5	47,285
2007	60.5	121,000 (estimate)
2008	8.9	17,775
<b>total</b>	<b>564.4</b>	<b>1,352,674</b>

Source: Central Scotland Forest Trust

- 6.3 A number of factors have collectively contributed to the reduced level of grant driven woodland expansion over the recent period. This includes planting not being considered to be as competitive in comparison with other agricultural activities and concern about uncertainty over new grant schemes. These issues will be important to resolve as the new Central Scotland Green Network builds up momentum.
- 6.4 A policy area covered in both development plans is area enhancement, particularly related to transport corridors and town centres. Considerable progress has been made through the Falkirk Greenspace initiative and community-led projects funded by the Falkirk Environment Trust, but generally there has been limited correlation between the location of enhancement projects and the priority corridor locations set out in development plan policy. Town centre enhancement has been more focussed, with major work completed in Bo'ness and Stenhousemuir town centres, and there has been further public realm improvements associated with the historic St Modan's Church in Falkirk Town centre underway most recently.

- 6.5 The Development Plan plays a major role in providing the land use context for the Council's Outdoor Access Strategy. Falkirk Council has a strong record on outdoor access and is a lead authority in the field in Scotland. With the enactment of Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 in February 2005 the Council acquired an extensive range of new statutory duties, including duties to uphold access rights, and to produce a Core Path Plan which identifies a network of key routes for non-motorised access throughout the Falkirk Council area. This Plan was adopted in 2010.
- 6.6 There is a network of 172 km of maintained routes of which it is estimated that c90 km have been upgraded since 2001. Around 153 kms of core paths are now sign posted. The network includes the local path networks developed around many of the area's communities, between communities, and around key visitor attractions like the Falkirk Wheel and the two canals. Much work has been achieved through partnership working with Central Scotland Forest Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust, often linked to development proposals or programmes such as Safer Routes to School.

#### Natural Heritage

- 6.7 A substantial proportion of the Falkirk Council area (20%) is covered by a natural heritage designation, represented by the full hierarchy of designations from SPA/Ramsar sites to SACs, SSSI's, LNRs, Wildlife sites and SINCs, totally 5,996ha. Since 2002 there has been one new SPA designated at Slamannan Plateau and the Council's first new Local Nature Reserve declared at Bonnybridge. 19 wildlife sites and 7 SINCs have been created, while 2 sites have been lost.

**Table 6.2 Natural Heritage Designations**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Number of sites</b>	<b>Total area in Falkirk Council area</b>
Special Area for Conservation (SAC)	1	Black Loch 2.5ha approx. (overall area of SAC = 108.42ha)
Special Protection Areas (SPA)	2	Firth of Forth 1440ha approx. (overall area of Firth of Forth SPA = 6313.68ha)  Slamannan Plateau 10.3ha approx. (overall area of Slamannan Plateau SPA =616.10ha)
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	10	2012.28ha approx. (based on SSSI citations and estimate of Firth of Forth SSSI within Falkirk area taken as estimated area of SPA + 100ha). This also includes approximately 95 ha of the new Slamannan Plateau SSSI.
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	1	28 ha - Bonnyfield Park, Bonnybridge
Wildlife Site	62	2101.29ha (including total areas of cross boundary sites)

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)	25	345.44ha
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Source: Falkirk Council Planning and Environment Unit

- 6.8 Policy has focussed on protection of such sites in the first instance, and protection of sites has been largely successful despite developer pressure. Where development has been permitted policy has sought to achieve mitigation, measures for future management or improvement, or to provide replacement habitat. There are 11 sites which have been the subject of improvement or enhancement works over the last two years, ranging from the removal of invasive species at North Polmont Wood Wildlife Site to reseedling of a meadow at Birkhill SINC.
- 6.9 Although not on a designated site, RSPB Scotland opened a new reserve at Skinflats during 2009 on former agricultural land beside the River Forth. The Skinflats Tidal Exchange Programme aims to re-create a habitat for wildlife whilst allowing the Forth to flood the area as part of a natural flood management programme. The reserve boundary extends beyond the seawall into an area of mudflats, which are covered by the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

#### Built Heritage

- 6.10 There are over 300 Listed Buildings and structure in the Council area, with concentrations in Bo'ness, Falkirk and Airth. Policy has sought primarily to protect these buildings and to promote their reuse. Monitoring over the period has identified significant improvement works to several buildings in Bo'ness including the Hippodrome Cinema and the Art Deco council flats at Corbiehall, and the former Red Lion Inn at Bankside in Falkirk. A number of former country houses have had enabling development proposals considered by the Council, e.g. at Lathallan and Dunmore House but others remain under threat or have been demolished through deterioration, such as Larbert House and the Pilkington Building at Central Business Park.
- 6.11 There are 9 Conservation Areas within Falkirk Council Area. Since 2002 there has been a growing awareness of the role that built heritage conservation can play in wider regeneration strategies. and during the latter half of the plan review period all of these Conservation Areas have been appraised to confirm their current status and value. All of the Conservation Areas have been retained and in a number of cases their boundaries have been extended. Consequential Conservation Area Management Plans have also been prepared with around two thirds now approved.
- 6.12 Starting in 2005 three heritage initiatives have been implemented in the three most important Conservation Areas with significant townscape assets, at Bo'ness, Airth and around St Modan's Church in Falkirk. These have involved substantial landscaping and streetscape improvement through landscaping and public realm enhancements and, in the case of Bo'ness, including grant-aid to assist owners with building repairs and shopfront improvements

- 6.13 The FCLP introduced the designation of Areas of Townscape Value to recognise areas with coherent and historically significant groups of buildings. A commitment to undertake character appraisals of these area to assess whether they can be 'promoted' to the status of Conservation Areas has yet to be implemented and this is an issue that should be considered for taking forward in the next development plan period.
- 6.14 The area also has a considerable inventory of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including major features like the Forth and Clyde Canal, Union Canal, Blackness Castle, Kinneil House and the Antonine Wall. The canals have been transformed through the millennium project which restored them to operational status in 2002. The area's Roman heritage was recognised with the inscribing of the Antonine Wall as part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site in July 2008. It is the fifth site in Scotland to be placed on the World Heritage List. Draft Supplementary Guidance aimed at providing a consistent and robust framework for the protection and enhancement of the Wall has being prepared jointly by the five planning authorities through which the wall passes.

Vacant, derelict and contaminated land

- 6.15 As noted earlier the Falkirk area played an important role in the industrial revolution and was a major centre for iron working and mining. With the demise of these industries, largely during the 1980s, the area had a considerable legacy of derelict or potentially contaminated sites.
- 6.16 The Council is required to monitor and record change in the amount of vacant and derelict land in its area and submit returns to the Scottish Government Statistician Group. While the amount of land taken up by development fluctuated from year to year the trend over the review period (2002-10) shows a reduction in the amount of vacant and derelict land from 285 ha to 119 ha, a fall of 58%, the highest in Scotland.

**Table 6.3 Change in Vacant and Derelict Land**

Year	Total vacant and derelict land (ha)	Vacant and derelict land brought back into use (ha)	New vacant and derelict land identified (ha)
2002	285	19	38
2003	261	25	1
2004	252	30	22
2005	209	43	6
2006	205	11	6
2007	145	65	17
2008	139	7.5	0.86
2009	137	4	0.86
2010	119	n/a	n/a

- 6.17 In regard to land which may be contaminated the remediation of such sites is handled through both planning and environmental legislation. The Council can undertake remediation work itself under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 but, with limited resources, only 3 sites (Redding Park, Summerford Park and Tamfourhill) have been treated this way. Most remediation is undertaken through the planning process when sites are restored through

development, thereby contributing to the physical enhancement of the area and reducing the need to release greenfield sites for development. In 2010 the Council published an SPG on Development of Land Affected by Contamination.

### Flood Risk

- 6.18 Falkirk Council area faces considerable issues of both watercourse and coastal flooding, having a hydrology dominated by the Forth Estuary and the two catchments of the Rivers Avon and Carron that flow into it.
- 6.19 The Indicative Flood Map produced by SEPA in 2007 indicated that outside the main Scottish cities, the Falkirk Council area is most at risk from flooding, with over 8,000 properties considered vulnerable. Amongst the areas at highest risk are the coastal zones around Grangemouth and Bo'ness, while the extensive carseland north of the Carron and other more localised riparian areas of the Rivers Carron, Avon and their minor tributaries are also shown at risk of flooding. The intention of the Flood Map is to raise awareness of flood risk and to assist local authorities in taking a more proactive approach to flood risk management.
- 6.20 The final phase of a 3 year project to provide a Flood Prevention Scheme for the town of Bo'ness was completed in September 2010. This scheme protects the town by a series of embankments and barriers along the foreshore between Kinneil in the west and Carriden in the east. In 2008 a much smaller flood protection scheme was constructed to reduce the risk of flooding from the Avon (Anchor) Burn in Dunipace, an area which had been subject to flooding in the past.
- 6.21 In 2010 the Phase 1 report on Grangemouth flood risk assessment study was completed for Falkirk Council. This shows a smaller area of the town at risk than in the SEPA Indicative Flood Risk maps. Areas found to be most at risk of flooding are the docks, industrial areas close to the foreshore (Ineos) and around Wholeflats/Kinneil, and residential areas at Glensburgh. This study is the first phase of further work with partner stakeholders to tackle flood risk.
- 6.22 As part of its statutory duties the Council produces a Flood Report every 2 years. This was last published in November 2009, and details flooding events recorded during the preceding 2 years along with both proposed and implemented measures taken to reduce flooding within that period.
- 6.23 In spite of the scale of the overall risk of flooding, during the recent past flooding incidents within Falkirk Council area have been relatively small scale, and have tended to be caused by localised surface water management and maintenance issues. For example, in the period November 2007 to October 2009, a total of 21 incidences of flooding were noted. Of these some eight related to watercourses, with the majority of the remainder due to surface water runoff. Works undertaken to prevent future flooding include clearance of debris from burns and culverts, regular clearance of trash screens, and construction of bunds along watercourses.
- 6.24 In October 2009 the Council published a Supplementary Planning Guidance note on 'Flooding and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.'

- 6.25 As the issue of climate change has come to the fore flooding legislation has been overhauled. Over the next few years, the Council will be working towards fulfilling the duties placed upon it by the new Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, the overall aim of which is to deliver a timely, consistent and sustainable approach to the reduction of flood risk.

#### Waste

- 6.26 During the period of the development plan there has been considerable change in the handling of waste. The National Waste Strategy and Area Waste Plans were already in place in 2002 and these have driven the efforts to change the treatment of waste (primarily Municipal Waste) from landfilling to recycling and reuse.
- 6.27 Over the early period Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) recycling rates (which includes composting) were relatively static. However in 2004-5 there was a sharp rise in recycling following the Council's investment in new services (such as the 3-bin collection from households) and by 2005-6, the recycling rate had reached 30%. The Council continued to introduce new services (including kerbside recycling services, expansion of recycling points and centres, and continued emphasis on general waste prevention measures e.g. home composting). A recycling rate of 40% was reached in 2008-9 which exceeded the Scottish Government's national target of 40% for the recycling of MSW by 2010.
- 6.28 While success has been high in regard to MSW other waste streams e.g. construction waste, continue to, by and large, flow in the direction of landfill. Non-MSW accounts for over 75% of all waste taken to landfill. In the Falkirk area much of this waste is handled at the privately operated Avondale landfill site. This site is by far the largest in the Forth Valley area and has capacity to remain operational until at least 2020. Additional land is safeguarded for the site's expansion to deal with landfill waste.
- 6.29 The Area Waste Plans have now been superseded by the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan which aims to stop the growth of MSW and to reduce the amount of MSW going to landfill to 5% in 2025. The Zero Waste Plan recently provided a target figure of 3.3m tons as a rolling landfill capacity for Forth Valley, all of which would apply in practice to the Avondale site.

#### Minerals

- 6.30 The Falkirk Council area has a long history of mineral working and in spite of over 2 centuries of exploitation there are still resources of economic significance including coal, aggregates (sand, gravel and hard rock) and fireclay, which are being worked or have been worked in the recent past. The extent and volume of the resources is unclear and information on output is not easily obtained. Policy has sought to recognise the national significance of the resource while minimising environmental impacts where there has been working.
- 6.31 While there has been no active coal mining, either deep or open cast, over the plan review period there is still a live consent for open cast working in the Avonbridge area. Fireclay production is a by-product of coal extraction and therefore there has been no activity during the plan review period. A broad area of search, covering the Slamannan Plateau, for future open cast

production has been applied through the Development Plan since 2002. In the recent past there has been growing interest in the potential of coal bed methane and a number of consents have been granted for exploration and production in the Airth/Bothkennar area of Rural North.

- 6.32 There are 3 hard rock quarries in the west of the area, spread between Dunipace and Banknock. The two quarries north of Dunipace have been operating throughout the period while the one near Banknock reopened in recent years after a period of dormancy. In addition a proposal has been made very recently to open up a small quarry for dimension sandstone working north-east of Denny.

Issues: Would the built heritage strategy be strengthened through an assessment of Areas of Townscape Value?  
How will the next development plan relate to the area plans for flood risk and management?  
How can the LDP provide a local response to the national Zero Waste Plan?

## **7 Sustainable Transport and infrastructure**

- 7.1 Falkirk Council's location in the centre of Scotland gives the area very good strategic links with the rest of the country. Lying midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh means the council area lies astride the principal road and rail connections of the country.

### Strategic road network

- 7.2 Significant portions of the country's principal motorway network, comprising the M80, M876 and M9, skirt the northern edge of the central built up area. Branches continue northwards to Stirling and Perth via the M9 and M80, and north-eastward to Fife and Dundee via the M(A)876.
- 7.3 A number of strategic road projects have been completed, or are nearing completion, during the plan review period. Principal among these has been the completion of the Clackmannanshire Bridge, opened in 2009, which has doubled the bridge capacity over the Forth on the Glasgow/Fife/north-east Scotland corridor. Within the council area this project also involved the conversion of the A876 to dual carriageway with a new overbridge at Bourtrees roundabout. Other projects which have progressed are the upgrade of the A80 to motorway standard between Castlecary and Hags, due for completion in September 2011, and the Glenbervie slip roads on the M876, where work is expected to start soon. An outline of the progress of strategic and significant local road projects highlighted in the development plan is shown below.

**Table 7.1 Road network improvements**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Progress since 2002</b>
<i>Strategic network</i>	
A80/M80 improvement	Due for completion 2011
A876 to Kincardine Bridge	Completed 2009
M876/A9 Glenbervie slips	Legal procedures completed – start expected 2011
A801 Avon Gorge	Land acquisition completed and planning consent secured
M9/J6/Glensburgh Rd upgrade	Priority element of Grangemouth Freight Hub National Development
M9/J5 upgrade	Priority element of Grangemouth Freight Hub National Development
M9/J3 additional slips	Land safeguarded
<i>Local network</i>	
Inchyra road upgrade	Completed 2004
Grangemouth town centre bypass	Partially built as loop access to ASDA supermarket
Icehouse Brae/Laurieston Bypass (A9) junction improvement	Completed 2010
A904 Bo'ness Rd stopping up	abandoned
A9 Larbert Cross improvement	Completed 2010
A803 Gilston improvement	Planning consent
Denny Eastern Access Road	SPG on delivery prepared
A9/Grandsable Rd improvement	New road markings inserted 2009
Lionthorn distributor road	Completed 2009

Source: Falkirk Council Planning and Environment Unit

#### Sustainable transport modes

- 7.4 The council has a hierarchical approach to promoting sustainable transport in the Development Plan. This favours active modes such as walking and cycling before public transport (bus, rail, taxi), with private car transport at the bottom of the hierarchy. The Council undertook a household survey in 2009 which asked questions about travel to work and education to ascertain modal split in residents' use of transport. This sought to replicate the methodology of an earlier survey in 1998 and could also be compared with the 2001 census. The results are shown in table 7.2.
- 7.5 Comparing the 3 sets of data shows there has been some changes in modal share over the period, although as yet there has been no decisive shift towards sustainable transport modes. At best car travel has levelled out at around 69% usage, still far and away the most popular mode. There have been a welcome increase in the use of public transport (from 8% to 14%) but walking and cycling have actually declined in use, at least for commuting purposes. In spite of considerable efforts through campaigning and investment in sustainable transport schemes it would appear that improvement in household wealth during the 'noughties' has been a stronger countervailing trend.

**Table 7.2 Modal split**

Mode	2009 Household Survey	2001 census	1998 Household Survey
Car driver	62%	46%	55%
Works van	2%	-	3%
Car passenger	5%	13%	8%
Walk	10%	19%	15%
Bus	10%	11%	6%
Rail	4%	3%	2%
taxi	0%	1%	1%
Cycle	1%	1%	2%
Other	1%	0.5%	0%
Working from home	5%	4%	0%

- 7.6 Notable schemes undertaken in the area to support sustainable transport modes at a strategic level include the doubling of daytime frequency of train service on the flagship Edinburgh to Glasgow route through Falkirk High from around 2007, and improved train travel opportunities most recently on the Stirling route via Larbert with services extending to Alloa in 2009.
- 7.7 The improvement to rail services has been in response to, and in turn has engendered, increasing patronage, to the extent that usage of stations in Falkirk Council area has increased by almost 50% over the plan review period in general and for particular stations, such as Larbert, usage has nearly doubled. This in turn has created a requirement for more car parking space and schemes have been completed at Falkirk High, Larbert and Polmont stations to provide more accommodation.

**Table 7.3 Rail patronage**

Total Patronage					
Year	Larbert	Camelon	Falkirk (2 stations)	Polmont	Total
2001/02	339,912	61,493	1,195,985	436,943	2,034,333
2002/03	344,145	60,952	1,221,377	452,450	2,078,924
2003/04	398,287	72,986	1,323,516	502,543	2,297,332
2004/05	427,937	82,958	1,492,852	586,796	2,590,543
2005/06	469,311	89,934	1,523,772	586,796	2,669,813
2006/07	493,107	90,478	1,548,961	617,754	2,750,299
2007/08	549,268	96,593	1,593,205	634,741	2,873,808
2008/09	610,166	97,293	1,548,900	640,081	2,896,440

Source: Falkirk Council Transport Planning Unit

- 7.8 In relation to bus travel there are no figures available from the bus companies on usage levels, due to commercial confidentiality in a deregulated industry. With a relatively high level of subsidy for non-commercial routes by Falkirk Council, bus services, during the day time, in combination with commercial routes, are very frequent on all the radial routes in and around Falkirk. A few bus lanes have been inserted and there are plans for more. One park and ride associated with bus travel was completed at Carmuir in 2003 on the A803 western corridor, which unfortunately has attracted negligible patronage, but there are plans for further such facilities on the eastern and

northern corridors. While policy has precluded any increase in parking spaces in Falkirk Town Centre since 2005 the charging regimes, largely in private sector control, have been insufficiently co-ordinated or robust to steer car drivers towards park and ride except in the pre-Christmas period.

- 7.9 Other measures to support sustainable travel have been implemented to varying degrees over the review period. School travel contributes to road congestion in specific localities and to alleviate this, the council has promoted the Safer Routes to School initiative widely. The 4 most recently rebuilt secondary schools all have School Travel Plans, all schools now have 20mph zones around their entrances and 40 schools have cycle parking. A survey carried out in 2009 found the following modal split for school travel across Falkirk: Cycle 3%, Bus 7%, Car 35%, Taxi 2%, and Walking 53%.

#### Freight Transport

- 7.10 Freight transport plays a relatively large role in the Falkirk transport network. The area has developed as a transport hub for Scotland, centred on Grangemouth. The docks there contain the country's principal container port where significant investment has been made, or is planned, to expand handling facilities. This has brought about the development of a major logistics industry in the environs and an intermodal road-rail facility operated by TDG Nexus and the Malcolm Group has grown up at Wester Newlands on the Grangemouth branch railway line to complement the sea-rail-road intermodal facility at Grangemouth Docks. This facility has attracted both ASDA and Tesco as the hub through which containers are brought by rail from England for distribution by road around Scotland, a 'green' initiative which, ironically, has added to the considerable levels of road freight traffic in and around Grangemouth.
- 7.11 The role of these facilities was recognised in the designation of the Grangemouth Freight Hub National Development in 2009. This seeks to implement a package of infrastructure improvements around the locality to tackle the issues of traffic congestion at key junctions and enhance the capacity of the area for the further development of freight distribution.

#### Water and Drainage

- 7.12 The development strategy of Sustainable Growth in All our Communities has been dependent on the pace at which the requisite infrastructure can be put in place. In the case of water supply and sewerage infrastructure there were issues in the early part of the review period in localities in the northern area of the district, which for a period threatened the pace of development at the North Larbert Strategic Development Opportunity in particular. However in 2006 Scottish Water changed its approach to new development and since then the organisation has been funded to provide strategic capacity at water, and waste water, treatment works for domestic demand to facilitate growth in line with Local Authority priorities, i.e. where sites are supported in the development plan and have obtained planning consent.
- 7.13 There are 11 Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) serving the council area, 5 of which are large capacity works serving the bulk of the urban area. Two of these works, at Denny and Bonnybridge, have received investment during the plan review period by Scottish Water to upgrade their facilities. The remaining rural area is served by a number of smaller works with varying

capacities. Some of these have very low capacities and therefore pose a potential constraint on development proposals in their catchments. Two of these, Airth and Torwood, are programmed for investment by Scottish Water during the 2010-15 investment period, which should allow the development of allocated sites in Rural North to proceed unconstrained. However in other localities, notably Whitecross and Avonbridge, the WWTWs have capacities lower than the sum of housing units located on currently allocated sites within their catchments. While phasing of development may allow management of remaining capacity, it is nevertheless likely that promotion of these localities for further development should be considered cautiously.

Issue: what should be the balance between confining development to a scale that fits with existing transport and sewerage infrastructure and requiring extensions of infrastructure in particular locations to facilitate further growth?
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## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The last ten years have seen major changes in the area, and progress in the ongoing process of its physical and economic regeneration. Under the influence of the Structure Plan's strategy of growth, and higher than expected levels of in-migration, the population of the area has increased by over 5% from 2002 to 2010, this growth being shared round most of the settlements in the area, and reversing population decline in a number of communities. Up until 2007, housing growth was faster than anticipated by the Structure Plan, peaking at around 1,000 completions per annum in 2003, and the Structure Plan's target population for 2020 of 152,000 has already been reached.
- 8.2 This rapid growth has put additional pressure on physical and community infrastructure, although there has been major investment in new education and healthcare facilities, particularly new and upgraded schools, and the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital.
- 8.3 Over the plan review period there has seen a growth in employment within the area up until 2008. The economy has diversified further although manufacturing still takes up a bigger proportion of employment than the Scottish average. Falkirk Town Centre has maintained its competitive position, and there has been considerable expansion of retail floorspace in the area, including a number of new foodstores within district and other centres across the area. The opening of the Falkirk Wheel, attracting around half a million visitors a year, has put the area firmly on the tourist map of Scotland.
- 8.4 Considerable progress has been made in improving the environment of the area, with a significant reduction in the quantity of vacant and derelict land, and the development of community woodland and path networks around the urban fringe through the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative. This will be taken to a further level by the Helix project which will transform the landscape between Falkirk and Grangemouth. There has been increasing recognition of the area's heritage through the restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals and the World Heritage Site status accorded to the Antonine Wall.

- 8.5 Since 2008, the economic downturn has had a significant impact on the area. Housing completions have dropped dramatically, economic growth has slowed, and unemployment has risen. Progress with some of the major development and regeneration initiatives contained within the development plan has stalled as a consequence. Financial constraints on both public and private sectors present an uncertain environment for both the continuing implementation of the strategy set out in the current development plan, and consideration of the future vision for the area through the new Local Development Plan.
- 8.6 A summary of some of the key issues which are likely to be taken forward to the new Local Development Plan is:
- With a continuing rising population in Falkirk Council area, which has overtaken the Structure Plan target 10 years early, considering whether the area has the capacity to continue with a growth strategy or should a period of consolidation be required
  - Dealing with the hiatus in house building activity while acknowledging there is a substantial supply of undeveloped land allocated for housing
  - Ensuring that the community and physical infrastructure matches the rising population
  - Reviewing the current suite of sites for business and industry, to assess their continuing attractiveness for job creators
  - Ensuring that adequate resources are released for infrastructure to support Grangemouth's nationally important port and industry
  - Completion of the district town centres regeneration and supporting the revitalisation of Falkirk town centre
  - To ensure the success in protecting the natural environment and enhancing access to the green network is continued into the Central Scotland Green Network

## **9 Supporting documents**

Falkirk Council Structure Plan 2002  
Falkirk Council Structure Plan 2007  
Falkirk Council Local Plan 2010  
Development Plan Monitoring Reports 2003 - 2010.

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