

Tuesday 8 September 2026 • Paisley Town Hall

The Renfrewshire Economy

Partnership Conference



Theme 1: Spending Power and Increasing Local Benefit

Desired Outcome: More wealth retained and recirculated within Renfrewshire's economy.

Key Questions:

If every anchor institution increased local spend by just 5%, what difference could that make to the Renfrewshire economy?

How can we use our collective spending power to create greater local economic, social and environmental value?

Delegate Feedback:

- Create more opportunity for local people.
- Targeting local suppliers and providers to support them on how to work with public sector.
- Tax investment sites should be used as opportunity for industry and employment.
- We need to celebrate success and share knowledge and expertise. Promote wins and bring people on the journey.
- Significant ripple effect - improves services, increased employment opportunities, associated health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Spend stays in Renfrewshire and improving the lives of Renfrewshire residents capacity growth of local businesses to take on more opportunities.



Theme 2: The Public Sector as an Employer of Choice

Desired Outcome: Fair employment, reduced inequalities and increased participation.

Key Questions:

What one change would have the greatest impact on increasing economic participation in Renfrewshire?

How can we use our role as employers to create opportunities and improve outcomes for local people?

Delegate Feedback:

- SBWAs to support internal Renfrewshire Council teams to recruit suitable candidates.
- National Living Wage helps to attract more candidates, especially young ones.
- Community Benefit Opportunities has improved recently and works well for unemployed people in Renfrewshire especially young people.
- A great offer through Invest in Renfrewshire especially for parents.
- Industry visits for high schools works well for young people.
- School Leavers' Destination Report has been high in recent years. 97% last year. A lot of partnership effort goes into this.
- Marketing opportunities wider, letting our communities know what support is available to them. Having one single website that pulls together all services and information from partners.
- Community connection to understand peoples barriers to ensure that we have the right offers in place. This should be followed by a corporate offer on work experience, traineeships and jobs.
- Recruitment Board to be set up and meet on a quarterly basis.
- Invest in own staff for succession planning.
- Sectoral awareness and work experience for all.
- Opt out approach - mandating services to provide work placements / traineeships / apprenticeships every year.
- Rigid recruitment processes that lack flexibility and sometimes guidance. More flexibility overall within the council, not one that has to be led by the individual recruiting manager.



Theme 3: Public Assets Delivering Community Value

Desired Outcome: Stronger communities and more inclusive place-based growth.

Key Questions:

If we were designing Renfrewshire from scratch today, how would we use our public assets differently?

How can public assets create greater economic, social and community value?

Delegate Feedback:

- Not every org wants to go through a CAT process, what other options are available for orgs looking for community spaces who are expanding their services, and delivering qualifications.
- Can we create a CAT forum/network.
- More simplified planning process
- Simplified licensing
- Creating a better platform for communities to highlight needs, and creating the framework for public services to better directly match these
- Transport a key issue. Better connectivity which is affordable is required
- The concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods needs more emphasis
- More places to do stuff. Activities are important
- Community spaces that bring together shared activities
- New assets being shared community assets, e.g. Paisley Grammar being a shared campus. Paisley Centre could be a community hub with all services available e.g. police, SDS, Careers, Health Service
- Conversations with the right people are needed to inform the way forward e.g. young people, elderly.
- Create a network of expertise and support for public assets/community space that can provide support with the process especially navigating through the cat or other options as costs can be too high to rent space.
- Some community facilities have a commercial model which creates competing demand.
- Partnership working and collective spirit and everyone genuinely want to make a difference.
- Funding is the biggest barrier, competing priorities of different agendas, for example climate change.
- Better depth of measurement of social value of decisions made in the public sector that impact communities
- Asset mapping to make sure the assets we have are being used and shared effectively between partners
- Strengthening transport links and taking a place-based approach to improving access to existing assets

Theme 4: Creating the Conditions for Inclusive and Thriving Enterprises

Desired Outcome: Growth of local businesses, social enterprises and community enterprises.

Key Questions:

What is one thing that currently makes it harder than it should be to do business in Renfrewshire, and how can we fix it?

How can we create the conditions for local businesses and social enterprises to start, grow and thrive?

Delegate Feedback:

- Bus services for those further away from a train station.
- Health reputation.
- Young people are not work ready when leaving school.
- Training and qualifications linked directly to incoming vacancies.
- The lack of information/misinformation being shared. There is no one place for businesses/SME needs, services and supports to be advertised and shared.
- Communication.
- Connectivity/Infrastructure (ie. to Airport/Renfrew – impacts employees (shift work), improved public transport. We need a plan and financial backing. Also need a joined-up partnership approach.
- Council bureaucracy - difficult to navigate. Could licensing process be simpler?
- Transport - connections require to be improved.
- Skills shortage - invest in staff & training
- Lack of awareness support -need to create a network of support. People, groups, businesses need to have a one stop shop of trusted providers that they can access to help them grow, innovate, learn etc
- Council not having an overview of all social enterprises, local business and what they can offer. What is out there?
- Communication gaps - increased partnership working.
- Lack of footfall. Impacts local business. Public sector working in office full time will drive demand and support local business, local transport and wellbeing
- Need to adopt increasing amount of innovation & technology



Opportunities

Delegates at each of the themed tables were asked to identify the opportunities that could arise from achieving the desired outcomes for Renfrewshire. While discussions varied across themes, several common opportunities emerged.

Key Opportunities Identified

- An increase in the number of local businesses successfully securing contracts and winning work within Renfrewshire, helping to create greater economic resilience, long-term stability and sustainable growth.
- Strengthening Renfrewshire's reputation as an attractive place to do business, invest, work and live, supporting inward investment and talent retention.
- Enhanced partnership working between public bodies, community organisations and other stakeholders, leading to more coordinated and effective service delivery.
- Greater utilisation of existing assets and community spaces, ensuring facilities are used more effectively to meet local needs and maximise community benefit.
- Improved access to healthcare services, training opportunities and employment pathways, supporting better outcomes for residents and communities.

Barriers

Delegates at each table were asked to identify the key barriers to achieving the desired outcomes within each thematic area. While there were some theme-specific challenges, the feedback highlighted several common barriers which can be grouped into the following key areas.

Financial Barriers

- Limited funding opportunities for community groups and organisations.
- Increasing financial pressures on public bodies, with budget reductions affecting the delivery of services.
- Short-term funding arrangements, which can limit the ability of organisations to plan strategically and deliver sustainable, long-term provision.

Physical Barriers (Transport, Childcare and Infrastructure)

- Limited availability of public transport services and the increasing cost of travel, which can restrict access to opportunities and support.
- Insufficient childcare provision and the cost of childcare, creating barriers to participation, employment and engagement.
- Infrastructure challenges that can impact accessibility and connectivity across communities.

Communication and Collaboration

- A need for greater collaboration both within organisations and across public sector, third sector and community partners to reduce silo working.
- The importance of developing a more joined-up approach, with shared priorities and common goals that partners can collectively work towards.
- Limited awareness of existing services, support and opportunities, highlighting the need for improved communication, promotion and sharing of positive stories and outcomes.

Strategic and Regulatory Challenges

- Challenges in balancing competing priorities and determining where resources and efforts should be focused to achieve the greatest impact.
- Regulatory requirements, administrative processes and legislative changes that can create barriers to innovation and hinder the implementation of initiatives that could deliver meaningful change.

Next Steps

Delegates were invited to identify and provide feedback on one collective action that anchor organisations could undertake over the next 12 months to help achieve the desired outcomes discussed during the table sessions.

In summary, there was strong consensus that anchor organisations should work more collaboratively across the area, exploring innovative ways of working, developing collective offers, identifying shared opportunities, and creating a coordinated pipeline of projects that deliver economic, social and community value. Alongside this, delegates emphasised the need for more effective marketing and communication of existing provision, support and opportunities to improve visibility, accessibility and uptake.

