

Message from the Chair

2014 was a year when the people of Scotland faced their most crucial question in over 300 years; a year when the economy was one of the most prominent subjects discussed, debated, defended and argued over.

Whilst the result of the Independence Referendum on 18 September 2014 might seem a distant memory, it is clear that with events since, including the Smith Commission, the debate on Scotland's future continues, and the economy remains at the centre of that debate.

Ministers clearly recognise this, leading to the current work to refresh the Government Economic Strategy - a process in which we at SLAED are fully participating.

At this year's 'strategically re-scheduled' conference, the timing is now right for us to pause and think about the question "What now for local economic development in Scotland?"

It may be too early to be sure where the Smith Commission and the subsequent political choices will take Scotland and what direct impact it will all have on local economic development. But it is never too early for us to position ourselves to influence and respond quickly to a changing landscape.

As economic development practitioners, we are accustomed to change. In Local Authorities, often the only *constant* is change. This is a good thing. It drives innovation, partnership, co-production and new ways of working. The continuing challenge facing Local Authority resources drives a further set of changes as we seek even further efficiencies in everything we do.

Last year, I reported that we needed to take forward our development plan: to raise the profile of local economic development and to promote SLAED as a network of substance, with parity of esteem amongst our counterparts in the Enterprise Network. With the support of the Scottish Government in the shape of our secondee Andy Kinnaird, I feel we have made significant progress. Our new constitution and structure will make for a leaner and more proactive SLAED with an ability to be more fleet of foot.

The work of SLAED and its members highlighted in this Report, to me, provides excellent examples of the value-add that SLAED brings to the Local Economic Development landscape. We respond to a need to work together, but ensure that local decisions remain local. This is what is needed as we move forward in an environment of changing governmental responsibilities. SLAED needs to be in a position to speak up for Local Authority Economic Development issues and do its part to ensure that any new powers are put to best effect.

I would take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped SLAED make such significant progress this year. I look forward to a year ahead which promises to be filled with further opportunities and challenges.

Bring on the change!

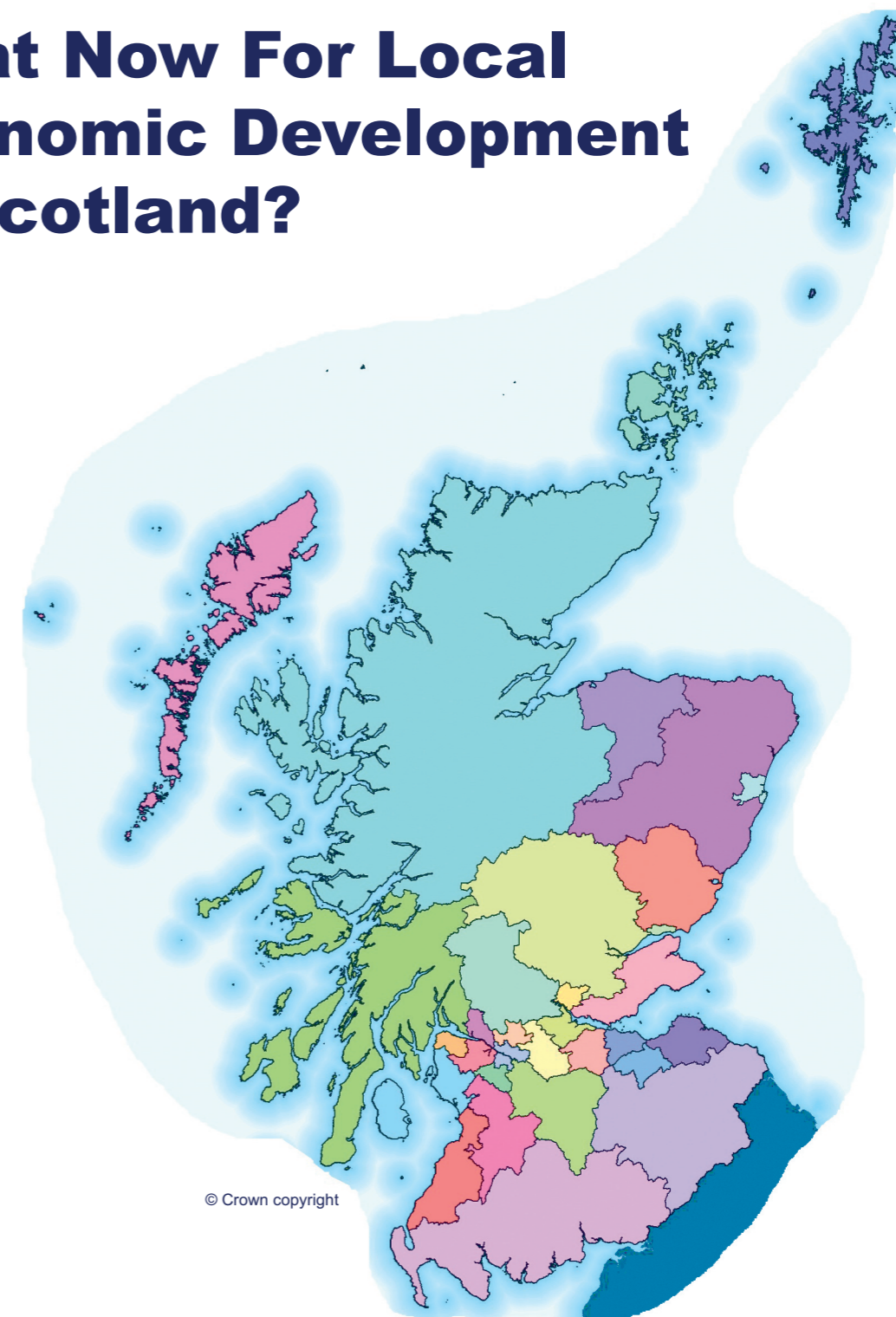
Jim Galloway

Chair
SLAED

www.slaed.org.uk



What Now For Local Economic Development In Scotland?



Foreword



2014 was a hugely significant year for Scotland. We were under a global spotlight, giving us significant exposure to showcase all that is great about Scotland. And that we did.

Your Conference is now asking the question 'what now for local economic development?' at exactly the right time. Indeed, at the Scottish Government, we are refreshing our economic strategy for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The Scottish Government is absolutely and resolutely focused on creating more, better-paid jobs in a strong and sustainable economy and on tackling the inequalities that can hold us back.

Effective collaboration is crucial. I am delighted to see the progress you have made in reforming SLAED and in growing your reputation as a strong collaborative and a knowledgeable body on local economic development.

We can and always will achieve the best results for Scotland when we stand together. I very much look forward to us working closely through 2015 and beyond to enhance Scotland's competitiveness and to create a more equal and fair society.

Have a great Conference!

John Swinney MSP

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Economy
The Scottish Government

Local economic development services help change people's lives and improve outcomes through supporting innovation, business investment, job creation and skills development. The work being done in Scotland's councils is crucial to the route out of the difficult economic circumstances of recent years and into greater prosperity and a more equal society.

With one and a half thousand council officers directly supporting local economic development, the effort is substantial. And this is clearly paying off, with local authorities supporting over 17,000 businesses last year and directly assisting nearly 25,000 unemployed people to find work. Likewise, I'm heartened by all 32 councils' positive drive towards, and support for, payment of the living wage. Clearly these interventions change lives and provide better outcomes for our local communities and therefore reduce inequalities.

As COSLA Spokesperson for Development, Economy & Sustainability, I will continue to engage with SLAED and more widely, including with the Scottish Government and national agencies, for example through my co-chair role with the Minister on the Local Economic Development Partnership Forum. Partnership is the solution to improving outcomes and I very much appreciate the strong relationships and the shared ambition we have for Scotland's future both economically and more widely.

Councillor Stephen Hagan

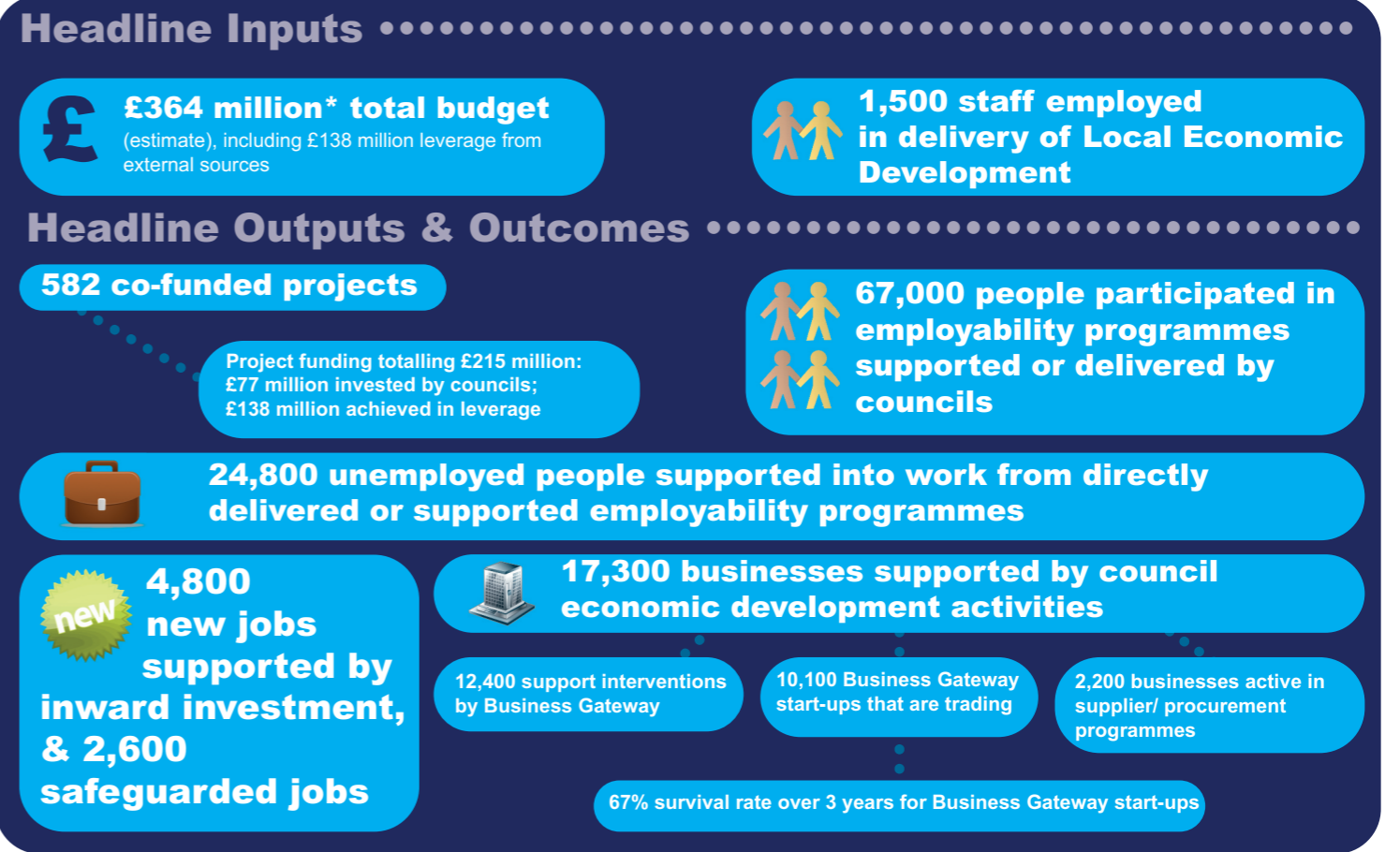
Spokesperson for Development, Economy & Sustainability
COSLA



2014: A Productive Year!

It has been a busy and rewarding year for SLAED members, both individually and collectively. Some highlights:

- We have taken a leading role in our response to new opportunities with the European Funding programmes. Our People, Business and European Funding groups have worked tirelessly to secure a good deal for employability and business support teams across the country.
- We have led on the emergence of the first ever pan-Scotland Local Authority Business Loan Fund, in close conjunction with our colleagues at the existing West and East of Scotland Funds.
- We held a very productive and successful Employability conference which built on the strong relationships across our membership and beyond, to help shape and articulate the local government distinctive contribution to the crucial and developing employability agenda. So successful that we're doing it again in 2015.



* Total Economic Development spend estimated by SLAED – not as part of the Local Authority Indicators Framework Report

Facing the future: a new, improved SLAED

During 2014, we carried out a radical shake-up of the SLAED structure and of the way we operate. Our last conference had been all about 'raising the profile of local economic development', and we have moved forward with a range of actions to take that from aspiration to reality.

SLAED is taking a far more proactive approach to leading our agenda through clear, agreed work programmes across our strategic and thematic interests - driven not just by external events but also by our members and their priorities. Our new structure and operations are strengthening the SLAED collaborative, working together and sharing ideas to support our continuous improvement.

