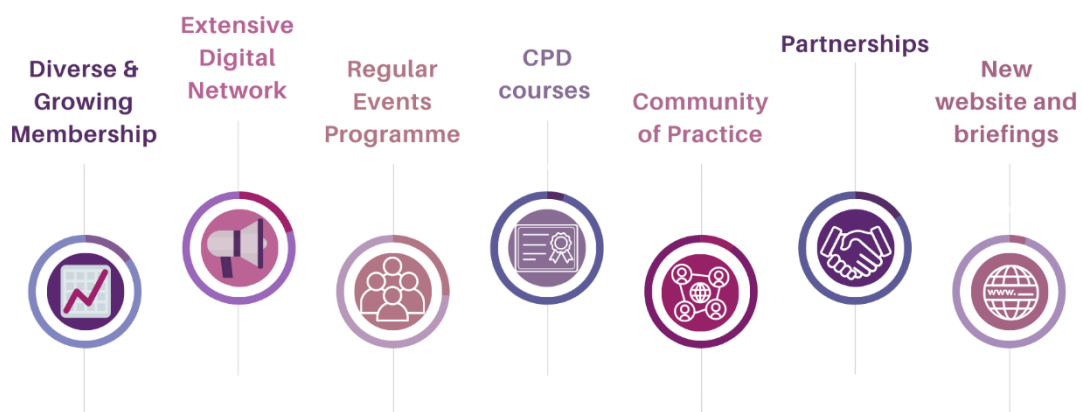


EDAS Draft Strategy – 2021-24

Introduction

For over twenty years, EDAS has been the main membership body that supports and represents those working in and contributing to economic development in Scotland. With over 3,000 members across the country, EDAS has developed a trusted reputation for delivering:

- high quality events and spaces for dialogue which attract academics and expert speakers each year;
- policy briefings, knowledge sharing and practitioner-led community of practice networks; and
- university-level CPD courses and learning opportunities to support the needs of the economic development community.



These offerings are at the heart of what EDAS delivers for its membership base each year. However, 2020 was a year like no other and in many ways a transition year for EDAS. It began with the appointment of a new Chair and a sudden and immediate move to online delivery as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Like so many organisations, longer term strategic planning was put on hold as we sought to navigate the new Covid-dominated world and understand its impact on Scotland's economy, people and places. Almost a year on, we are now forming our future vision and a strategy for EDAS for the next 3 years. Whilst our core purpose remains largely the same, the world we occupy has changed considerably since our last strategy was created in 2017. Our next strategy needs to reflect these changes as we continue to develop and support the priorities of our members in the years ahead.

With Covid-19 still dominating public policy planning for the foreseeable future; many key sectors temporarily shut down; and the EU exit now a reality, the full impact and fall out on Scotland's economy has still to be felt but clearly there are massive challenges ahead. Against such a backdrop, poverty, ill health and inequality continue to persist for far too many and we face a ticking clock in the race to address climate change and protect and secure our environment and natural assets.

The importance of economic development as a profession in shaping what lies ahead in a complex landscape has never been more important.

EDAS exists to ensure that those tasked with supporting Scotland’s economic recovery – the strategists and planners as well as the frontline practitioners – have the information, tools, connections and conversation spaces to have impact and make the difference that is needed. The road ahead may be challenging but it also represents a huge opportunity to create something better, economically, for our people, our country and our planet.

EDAS VISION

- That Scotland has a sustainable and prosperous economy that brings economic, social and environmental wellbeing to all of its people and communities, and
- That those delivering economic development have the optimum skills and knowledge to support and implement this vision.

Purpose

EDAS is an agent of change, facilitating a substantial improvement in the effectiveness of economic development activity in Scotland through increasing the knowledge, skills and networks of those involved in all aspects of economic development. This community is widening and EDAS will strive to promote partnerships and collaboration across all sectors so that the ideas, talents and assets of all who are key to creating a thriving economy are connected and we support the prosperity and wellbeing of Scotland’s people, businesses, communities and environment.

Strategic Priorities – see also diagram on page 6

For the period 2021-24, policy priorities will focus on the economic development opportunities across the following areas.

People	Planet	Place
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Wealth Building• Inclusive Business Models• Opportunities for disadvantaged groups• Fair and meaningful work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Net-Zero Transition• Circular Economy• Building Resilience• Natural Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional Partnerships and Growth Deals• Future of EU/Scotland/UK Funding• Land and infrastructure• Towns, cities and rural areas



People

We know that Scotland cannot truly thrive when 19% of households currently live in poverty. Whilst unemployment rates sit at around 4.5%, there continue to be geographic areas where economic inactivity rates are significantly higher (c. 23%).

With the current furlough scheme masking the true picture of employment across the country, the impact of the pandemic on unemployment has still to be fully felt but it will be significant. There are many already disadvantaged in finding secure and meaningful work – women, young people, people with disabilities and long term health conditions, those from BME communities; refugees; ex-offenders; those who are homeless and people over 50, as well as those who lack education and skills. These will be disproportionately affected as the economic fall-out emerges.

Over the last year, sectors such as hospitality, retail, tourism, personal services and culture have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Employment in these sectors is often low paid, cyclical and whilst the furlough scheme may offer some a degree of protection for now, people working in these sectors are at greatest risk of in-work poverty. Related to this, business owners face mounting debts with services put on hold or failing as a result of repeated lockdowns and many who would have previously felt economically secure, have suddenly faced business failure, unemployment, debt and uncertainty.

Looking ahead, Scotland continues to face demographic changes with an ageing population and major implications for care provision in the future, highlighted significantly during the Covid-19 crisis. Traditional economic development has not focused on employment opportunities in such sectors, yet demand for these services will grow in the decades ahead.

The pace of change in the 2020s demands that we equip existing and new employees with the skills to contribute to and benefit from a modern economy. This includes, for example, upskilling and reskilling workers for higher-skill, higher-income opportunities in a greener, digital economy.

Over the next three years, EDAS will work with members and partners to understand and interpret what is happening for individuals “on the ground” and to share a comprehensive, accurate and ambitious vision for how all of Scotland’s people and employees can engage with and benefit from our economy. We will create spaces to consider how these challenges and opportunities can be best addressed.

To support this theme, EDAS policy priorities will include:

- Community wealth building;
- Inclusive business models;
- Opportunities for disadvantaged groups; and
- Fair and meaningful work.



Planet

Climate change represents the most pressing challenge and priority for Scotland and the world in the years ahead. The future of our environment and of future generations depends on the decisions made by global governments now and actions taken across the next two decades. Scotland has a target of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to net zero by 2045 with interim targets in the decades before this.

Tackling climate change represents an unprecedented opportunity for the creation and adaptation of new green jobs and industries and a radical transformation of Scotland’s economy. For example, there will be opportunities for reducing the use of non-renewable natural resources, developing circular business models and supply chains, and helping businesses create the products and services that will support the net zero transition in Scotland and globally. Every business and organisation will need to adapt – unlocking huge employment and business opportunities – with action taken during the current decade being critical in helping Scotland meet its climate goals.

The Scottish Government’s Climate Change Plan and £2billion Low Carbon Fund plus related policies (e.g. Hydrogen policy statement, the Heat in Buildings Strategy, the Trade Vision) and recent work of the Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force and Just Transition Commission, will provide opportunities to meet climate change targets, drive a green economic recovery and promote the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities.

The Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan sets out the response that will be required from the skills system if Scotland is to deliver a Just Transition and capture the job opportunities that the transition to net zero represents.

The COP 26 Conference in Glasgow in November 2021 also offers a major focal point for EDAS to deliver events and discussion on climate change and our future economy with key experts, partners and members. COP26 will provide a catalyst in accelerating Scotland's transition toward a net zero future.

EDAS will help members to realise the economic development opportunities arising from the necessary net zero transition in a way that is as inclusive (of people and places) as possible.

To support this theme, EDAS policy priorities will include:

- Net zero transition;
- The circular economy;
- Building resilience; and
- Natural capital.



Place

The importance of place and geography will continue to be an important dimension for economic development in the years ahead. This is the policy theme where we see economic, social and environmental policy and practice being brought together.

The pandemic has altered the landscape and footfall of our cities and towns and a return to the urban life we knew pre-virus is now unlikely. Areas of poverty and deprivation, whether urban or rural, have been disproportionately affected by Covid and economic responses to recovery also need to take this into account.

At the same time, the pandemic has provided opportunities to break down geographic barriers between urban and rural areas and to increase levels of connectivity and digital inclusion across Scotland.

Moving forward, we need to rethink how our geography and locations will be used; what our physical environment will look like; how our communities adapt to a just transition and what this means for existing major capital investment programmes in order to promote long term economic prosperity and wellbeing. We see opportunities to build coherent responses, foster new relationships and collaborations to mutual benefit under this priority theme.

To support this theme, EDAS policy priorities will include:

- Regional economic partnerships and growth deals;
- The replacement of EU funds and future Scottish/ UK funding
- Land and infrastructure; and
- Towns, cities and rural areas.

Enabling Strategic Priorities

In focusing on these three themes (People, Planet, Place), we aim to be flexible to the changing policy landscape and priorities as they emerge over the next three years, knowing there will remain a need to continue to respond to macro priorities that have dominated recent years, namely Covid-19 and Brexit.

Underpinning each of our themes will be a focus on **key enablers** that support policy into practice and which we see as being:

- **Enterprise** and the need to align our support to entrepreneurs, businesses and investors to unlock new solutions, employment and investment that benefit local areas;
- **Innovation and productivity** and the need to drive creative, imaginative and inclusive responses to these challenges;
- **Skills** and the need for early identification of gaps and growth areas as well as training and learning approaches to meet these, that promote inclusion;
- **Finance** and the need to attract additional public and private investment from Scotland, the UK and globally and to utilise available public finance and procurement to maximise local economic benefits.
- **Partnership Approaches** and the need to bring together the public, private and third sectors to promote joined up thinking and delivery.

Approach

In taking forward our strategy, we will:

- Be forward looking and seek creative solutions;
- Promote member and partner collaboration;
- Feedback and influence policy through practice.
- Build the knowledge, capacity and skills of our members;
- Contribute to and learn from expertise and good practice at EU and international levels.

Activities

We will deliver our work in the following ways:

- Communities of practice on inclusive growth and net zero transition
- A regular programme of events with key partners including Covid to Climate Conversations
- CPD and learning to ensure members have the knowledge and skills needed to be impactful in a complex economic development landscape.



EDAS Strategy and Plan Summary 2021-24:

