

INTEGRATED REGIONAL EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS PROGRAMME

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Workforce Mobility Project (WMP) is part of the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal (City Deal), within the Integrated Employability and Skills programme (IRES). This report will provide an update on IRES and the opportunity for SEStran to sign the regional Community Wealth Building Pledge.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The IRES Programme and its cross-sector partnership is a change programme seeking to evolve regional labour market policy and practice to drive inclusive growth.
- 2.2 The IRES partnership is funded by £25 million investment (over eight years, concluding in March 2027) and will deliver an additional 14,700 skill improvements; 5,300 people into employment; and a further 500 career enhancements through its 7 themes:
- Integrated knowledge management systems
 - Labour market analysis and evaluation
 - Integrated employer engagement
 - Intensive family support service
 - Housing construction and infrastructure (HCI) targeted skills gateway
 - Data-driven innovation (DDI) targeted skills gateway
 - Workforce mobility
- 2.3 The programme delivered its targeted benefits by April 2025 and delivery partners have secured over £11 million in additional investment, representing a 64% uplift on the initial investment and underlining the exceptional value of this regional approach to skills.
- 2.4 The IRES Programme Management Office is working with new and existing partners to shape a Second Generation IRES Programme (including the WMP). The ambition is to build on the success in the first phase and secure continued investment in regional skills through to 2033 as the region will need an additional 116k workers by 2034.

3 IRES PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The IRES 2027+ Proposal sets out an ambitious plan to secure the workforce the region needs while supporting inclusive growth and helping more people move into

higher-skilled, better-paid work and respond to a rapidly changing labour market and a growing gap between skills and opportunity across the region.

- 3.2 At its core is a coordinated regional pathways system delivered through eight Skills Gateways, four Enablers (including the WMP) and two Capital Projects, strengthening progression routes out of low pay.
- 3.3 Building on the success of IRES, the next phase will establish a fully connected skills system, aligning education, training, employability support and employers around clear pathways into future-facing jobs.

4 SUPPORT THE IRES 2027+ PLEDGE

- 4.1 The IRES 2027+ Pledge invites all stakeholders, partners, employers, organisations and individuals across the region to support the continued development of the IRES Programme beyond 2027. [Support the Pledge - Integrated Regional Employability & Skills \(IRES\)](#)
- 4.2 As SEStran is a regional partner and delivering the WMP in partnership with the City Deal, it is proposed that the SEStran Board Chair signs the Pledge, a copy is provided in Appendix 1, on behalf of the Partnership Board to endorse the vision set out in the IRES 2027+ Proposal and the importance of a coordinated regional approach to skills. (The IRES Proposal is provided at following link [26.002_IRES2027Proposal_March26.pdf](#), with the WMP Business Case set out from page 107 onwards)
- 4.3 The 2026/27 national pilot element of the WMP, funded through Transport to Employment, is also pivotal in building the case for investment, providing the evidence required to demonstrate the value of a centralised data resource that delivers economies of scale, consistent approach to data intelligence to support decision making, and shared best practice. SEStran's leadership role in delivering the pilot continues to be critical, based on positive working with local/regional/national partners to drive adoption, build capability within transport teams, and strengthen confidence in data-led decision making. SEStran will play a defining role in establishing the credibility, sustainability, and long-term success of WMP.

5 LEGAL REVIEW OF PLEDGE COMMITMENTS

- 5.1 SEStran's external legal advisor (Anderson Strathern) was asked to undertake a review of the pledge and the accompanying email from the City Deal Programme management Office, and has confirmed that signing the pledge does not commit SEStran to any future funding, policy or operational obligation.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board:

- 6.1 Approves the signing of the IRES Pledge with the formal signature being undertaken by the SEStran Board Chair

- 6.2 Participates in a photograph to mark the formal signing of the IRES Pledge to be used in promotional activity by SEStran and the City Deal

Ewan Doyle

Senior Partnership Manager

2nd September 2026

Policy Implications	NA
Financial Implications	Support for the IRES 2027+ Pledge demonstrates support for the continuation of the Workforce Mobility, which SEStran has committed to being part of the delivery solution if future funding is identified.
Equalities Implications	The IRES 2027+ Pledge positively supports many Equality principles.
Climate Change Implications	NA



A Shared Leadership Pledge

By signing this pledge, I endorse the IRES 2027+ Proposal and support continued investment in IRES to align skills with industry demand and create pathways into higher-skilled, better-paid work across our region.

Signed in support of IRES 2027+:

Name:

Organisation:

Signature:

Date:

