

COMMITTEE: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 28 October 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

REPORT TITLE: Edinburgh Innovation Hub Update

REPORT STATUS: Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Edinburgh Innovation Hub.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the update on the Edinburgh Innovation Hub.

3 BACKGROUND

Edinburgh Innovation Hub overview

3.1 Background/Context

- The Edinburgh Innovation Hub is a £40m flagship development by East Lothian Council (ELC) and Queen Margaret University (QMU). Completion of the Hub in October 2025 signals the project partners' ambition to create a nationally significant facility to capture, support and grow innovation-led enterprise in East Lothian and the Edinburgh region. Located next to Queen Margaret University on land owned by East Lothian Council, the Hub will be a catalyst for the development of the wider Edinburgh Innovation Park (EIP).
- The Hub is a best-in-class innovation facility developed as the first phase of the Edinburgh Innovation Park, a new and unique development for innovation-led enterprise. The Hub shall significantly enhance the already successful offering of the

Edinburgh region for innovation and tech-based enterprise by providing serviced and fitted commercial laboratory and office space for high growth tech and innovation-based businesses.

- The Hub will facilitate a vibrant innovation cluster where high growth SMEs and innovation-led businesses co-locate with research and business networks under one roof to deliver a specialist service offering for commercial innovation. The Hub will provide a nucleus where people will congregate to network within high quality meeting space that can be configured for conferences, seminars, meetings, training and social events.
- The Hub will be a regional and national resource that will enable cross-sector collaborations and interactions at all levels. Businesses will benefit from a network of business support, and people and businesses will be brought together to share knowledge and skills at the 'crossing point' between R&D and commercialisation.

3.2 Construction period

- Construction started in January 2024 by the principal contractor, Heron Bros, after a complex and competitive procurement process. The construction phase of the development is nearing completion with building handover scheduled for October 2025. While 10 weeks later than original contracted, mitigations achieved in key client fit out works mean that this date is only 4 weeks beyond that planned within the overall development programme.
- The projected cost of the overall development remains within the approved budget of £36m, which includes £1.5m of Client Fit Out work and £0.5m of funding towards Hub operational working capital.
- The Hub consists of a mix of specialist laboratories and offices of various sizes offering a flexible but bespoke accommodation to accommodate the requirements of a range of tenants.

3.3 Operational activities

- Activities to ensure the operational readiness of the Hub and the Operating Company are ongoing. Client familiarisation and fitout works will be ongoing after the Hub will be available for occupation. Marian McNeil, the CEO of the Edinburgh Innovation Hub was appointed early in 2025 and will be responsible for overseeing operational requirements.
- Target markets for the Hub will be companies and enterprises that are innovation-led and compliant with the Gateway policy (which ensures control over the types of tenants to occupy the Hub and the EIP). In particular, the Hub will target companies in important growth sectors with specialist needs, including Life Sciences, Food & Drink, Technology, Startups, Spins outs and Enterprise initiatives. The Hub

has already attracted higher than expected interest from prospective tenants prior to officially opening with very positive feedback from potential tenants who have visited the Hub in recent weeks. The operational team are building on this interest and are to implement targeted marketing strategies to further attract tenants from the sectors.

3.4 Community Wealth Building impact

- Community Wealth Building is embedded in the hub project and has already realised benefits during the construction phase (see Appendix 1).
- The Hub is part of a Community Wealth Building ecosystem in East Lothian and the wider region, with QMU and ELC as anchors. Over time, the Hub will help accelerate Community Wealth Building work in East Lothian and unlock the potential for the wider Edinburgh Innovation Park.
- Working in partnership with the ESES City Region Deal team, Heron Bros have exceeded their Community Benefit obligations by 287%, supporting the Deal's Community Wealth Building commitments through the delivery of the following:

Local spend: Heron Bros local spend within a 40-mile radius has accumulated to over £400,000 over the course of the project. Charitable donations has topped £22,000 with over 50 hours of Heron Bros staff volunteering over the period.

Local employment: Local employment figures on the Hub accumulating to over 400 staff during the construction period, with 66% of labour from within the region. Two local East Lothian residents were supported into newly created entrant positions and have sustained their roles for the duration of the construction phase.

Student engagement and placements: Engagement with various local schools and education partners offering numerous site visits and work placements over a 4- week period. The site team and sub contractors engaged in daily taster sessions with the placement attendees giving them real world experience of the daily task of painters, electricians, plumbers, joiners, engineers and site managers.

3.5 Economic Benefits

The Hub and Edinburgh Innovation Park has and will generate job opportunities (from construction, operational requirements of Hub, occupying tenants). It will also generate inward investment to support innovation led research and development in the region, offer support skills pathways in innovation for students and young people and be a

critical participant and contributor to the existing innovation ecosystem in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region.

3.6 Edinburgh Innovation Park

The JV partners continue to monitor the opportunities and timescales associated with the wider park development and are engaged in discussions around prospects within City Deal 2.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Finance: East Lothian Council's £10M contribution is reflected in the approved capital plan.

5.2 Human Resources: There is no Human resource implication relating to the Edinburgh Innovation Hub

5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): There is no other implication relating to the Edinburgh Innovation Hub.

5.4 Risk: There is no Risk relating to the Edinburgh Innovation Hub

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 ***Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.***

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

X

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

☐

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

[Enter information on impacts that have been identified]

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Community Wealth building Report

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Council Report (Private) - Commercial Heads of Terms between ELC and QMU for the Delivery of the Food and Drink Innovation Hub and Park – 27 October 2020.
- 8.2 Council Report (Private) - Commercial Heads of Terms between East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University for the Delivery of the Food and Drink Innovation Hub and Park – 15 December 2020.
- 8.3 Council Report (Private) ELC/QMU Commercial Heads of Terms. – 27 April 2021.
- 8.4 Council Report (Private) East Lothian Council / Queen Margaret University Legal Update – 16 November 2021
- 8.5 Council Report (Private) East Lothian Council / Queen Margaret University Joint Venture – February 2022.

- 8.6 Council Report (Private) East Lothian Council / Queen Margaret University Joint Venture – March 2022.
- 8.7 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update– June 2022
- 8.8 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update – February 23
- 8.9 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update – November 23
- 8.10 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update – February 24
- 8.11 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update October 24
- 8.12 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update February 25
- 8.13 Members Library Report Edinburgh Innovation Hub update June 25

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

Report Author(s)

Name	Catherine Molloy
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Date	9 October 2025

Head of Service Approval

Name	Keith Dingwall
Designation	Head of Development
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Yes
Approval Date	13th October 2025

Community Benefits & Community Impact Report

October 2025

Community Benefits: Points Targets

- ***Points target set at start of contract** **15,000 points**
- **Heron Bros committed to overachieve;
projected points to be achieved** **22,950 points**
- **Actual points achieved to date** **50,210 points**
** 14,400 of these points have been achieved through the awards to local SME contractors*
- **% to target** **334%**

**Points target was calculated using East Lothian Councils CBiP points matrix against project value*

Community Benefits: Categories

Category 1 - Training and work experience

Category 2 - Employability and skills

Category 3 - Education and outreach

Category 4 - Local economy and social enterprise

Category 5 - Community engagement

Category 6 - Protecting and improving our environment

Key - **CRD** references the benefit has been received/offered across the ESES CRD area
- **ELC** references the benefit has been received/offered to ELC beneficiaries only

Category 1 - Training and work experience

- Work experience for **12-14** East Lothian Works school aged pupils (14+) 'Pathways to Construction' Launched 17th February, focus on bricklaying, joinery, painting **ELC**
- Work experience for **6** x 16+year old residents of the CRD area (ringfenced places for EL residents) Launched 10th February, funded via CITB, enabled by ESES CRD **ELC CRD**
- Work experience offered to **3** university / college students. Launching March 25 - tying to mock interview opportunity **CRD**

Category 2 - Employability & Skills

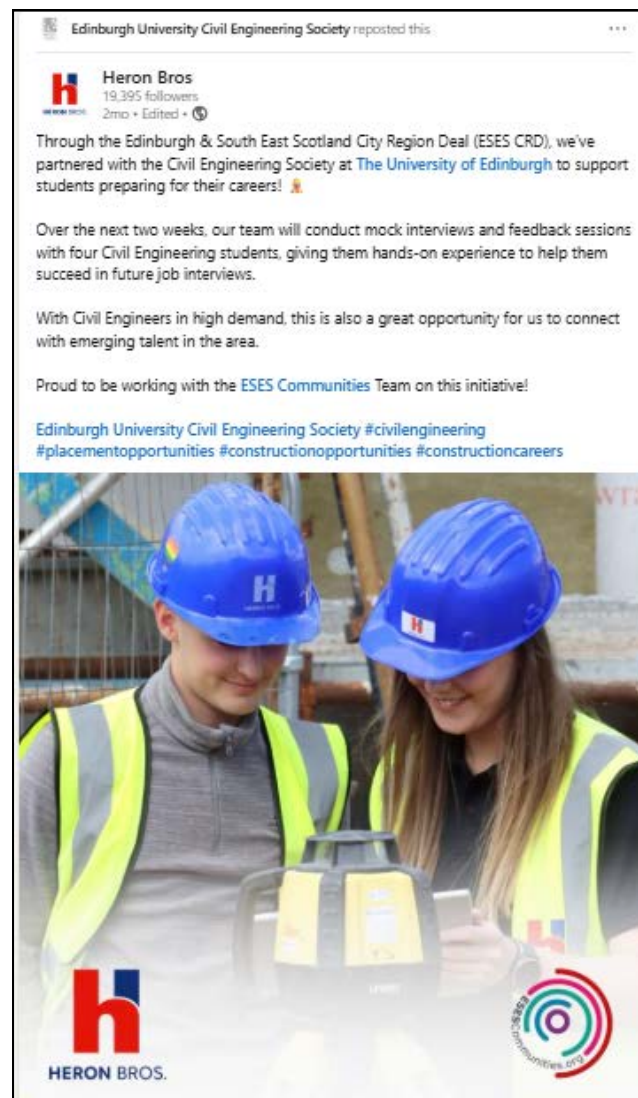
- 2 x Graduate apprenticeships created & employed on site **CRD**
- 3 x new full time employment opportunities created (sustained for over 12 months)
 - **Senior Engineer ELC**
 - **Gatesperson ELC**
 - **Fork Lift Driver ELC**
- 3 x accredited training opportunities for apprentice engineers **CRD**

Category 3 - Education & Outreach

Employability workshops, careers advice, site visits;

- **16** x Developing Young Workforce 'Introduction to Construction' students completed site visits and industry insight session. Complete January 2025. **ELC**
- **13** x Developing Young Workforce 'Level 5 Construction Pathways' students completed site visits and industry insight session w/c 17/02 **ELC**
- **15** x Developing Young Workforce students site visits and industry insights session. Complete 24th January 2025. **CRD**
- **15** x East Lothian Works Fabrication and Welding students offered to take part in offsite Fabrication/Manufacturing site visit to offer specialised learning, coordinated by Heron to supply chain partner TClark **ELC**
- **3** x Interview preparation and skills sessions for HE/FE students Complete March 2025 **CRD**

Category 3 - Education & Outreach Case Study



Heron Bros partnered with The University of Edinburgh's Civil Engineering Society to deliver unique sector experience. Over two weeks, their team conducted mock interviews and feedback sessions with four Civil Engineering students. This initiative provides invaluable hands-on experience, directly enhancing the students' readiness for future job interviews and careers in a high-demand field.

[!\[\]\(0678d1887db22e3f6b52fe38cd7e7b5b_img.jpg\) **Case study**](#)

Category 4 - Local economy & social enterprise

- Deliver a 'Meet the Buyer' event for SMEs to understand supply chain opportunities - held May 2024, 54 attendees at event **CRD**
- Employ local businesses as part of the supply chain, non extensive list below; **ELC CRD**
 - ~Contract awarded to Lagwell Insulation **ELC**
 - ~Gladsmuir based Concrete supplier **ELC**
 - ~Sawmill Timber, Tynninghame **ELC**
 - ~Foodtruck full time on site, new micro-business linked through Business Gateway **ELC**
 - ~Howdens Musselburgh awarded on site kitchen fitout contract **ELC**
- Support for Social Enterprises (SEs); opportunities for SEs through the main contract; East Lothian Roots and Fruits, The Bike Station, Low Impact Living (Climate Action Network) The Destiny Project, Archaeology Scotland **ELC CRD**

Category 5 - Community Engagement

- **Archaeology Scotland Refurbishment Project.** Heron renovated a learning space for young people resulting in 9 Musselburgh Grammar School pupils being awarded Heritage Hero Awards **CRD ELC**
- **East Lothian Roots and Fruits** - Heron staff donated high value gifts to the charity which supported 8 families over Christmas **ELC**
- **LIL Families Event** - Heron sponsored Bike Safety Checks and information sessions at the event using the Bike Station to assist families to get back to cycling. **ELC**



HERON BROS.

Category 5 - Case Studies



➡ **LIL Families Event** - Heron Bros sponsored free bike safety checks at the Haddington event, promoting sustainable living and active travel. This initiative supported the local community near the EIH, fostering well-being and a greener future in East Lothian.

➡ **East Lothian Roots and Fruits**



➡ **Archaeology Scotland Project** - This project transformed a shipping container into an outdoor learning facility for Archaeology Scotland, and now provides training and heritage skills to individuals, especially those in deprived areas, creating a positive destination for learning

Category 5 - Community Engagement

- **The Destiny Project** - Upskilling of community leaders and charity members/users on the importance of biodiversity within rural areas including the development of guides and training programmes for communities
- ***The Destiny Project*** - *Heron offered donation of materials and installing paving pathways to allow for Prestonpans Train station community garden to become fully accessible to all - not complete due to Network Rail permissions delay, alternative training (above) delivered*
- **Community Garden Donations** -Heron have sourced materials for local community gardens who offer opportunities for members to learn about gardening, bolster social inclusion and practice the 'seed to plate' ethos. **Planned June 2025 ELC**
- **Supporting In-Tandem** - Heron are providing Hi-Vis vests and engaging with a local organisation who offer cycling opportunities for visually impaired and members who have long term health barriers. **Planned June 2025 ELC**

Category 6 - Protecting & improving our environment

- **Bird house / bat house joinery project** with The Destiny Project, providing materials, workshop delivery and creation of boxes. Completed August 2025 **ELC (See Case Study)**
- **Bike workshop**, promoting sustainable travel and offering mechanics time to service East Lothian residents bikes. Coordinated through Low Impact Living (Climate Action Network). Completed April 2025 **ELC**
- **QMU Outdoor learning hub** - Heron have donated materials including stone, blockwork, wood, rock and pipes for outdoor space and estate landscaping **ELC**
- **Materials for community gardens** - Heron and their supply chain are looking to provide 4 East Lothian community gardens with pallets which will be repurposed for planters and other projects to encourage skill sharing and additional planting. **ELC (See Case Study)**



HERON BROS.

Category 6 - Case Studies



➡ East Lothian Community Gardens Supported: Waste Reduction and Biodiversity Enhancement

Heron Bros diverting materials from landfill and donating them to four local community gardens across East Lothian.

The donation provided a substantial benefit to the local community groups by significantly reducing their material costs, allowing them to allocate limited funds to other priorities.

Furthermore, the repurposed pallets were used by the organisations for projects focused on growing local food and creating new habitats.

This resulted in a positive environmental impact by diverting waste from landfill and actively increasing biodiversity across East Lothian.

Category 6 - Case Studies

➡ Community, STEM and Habitat Creation

Heron Bros prepared and delivered a hands-on workshop focused on practical construction and environmental science. They provided 10 flat-pack bird box kits and instructed participants from The Destiny Project and the Heugh Community Garden on how to build them.

The workshop held at the Heugh Community Garden, demonstrated how to install the completed units to create local wildlife habitats, with participants taking home their units and the knowledge on how to install in their own communities.

A template of the kit and instructions were also provided to the Destiny Project to enable them to replicate for future groups, which will provide many young people the opportunity to learn basic construction skills.





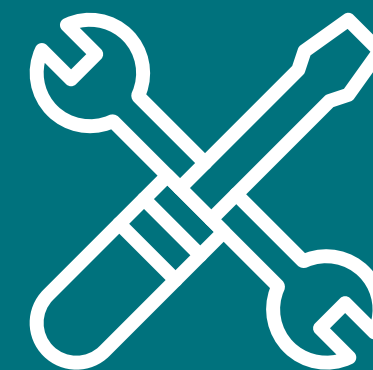
Local Workforce
144 employees onsite
reside within East Lothian



66% of the local labour
onsite are from within
a 40mile radius



TBC% of construction
spend was within
local area or with SMEs
(40 miles)



Toolbox Talks
149 hours dedicated to
employees engaged with
the project