

**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 16 June 2021**

---

**Report by: Chief Executive**

---

**Heading: Economic Spotlight report – Johnstone and the Villages**

---

## **1. Summary**

1.1 This report introduces the second in a series of “Spotlight” reports on Renfrewshire’s economy and key locations. For June 2021 the focus is Johnstone and the West Villages, with the full report being attached to this paper. Further updates will focus on other important employment locations such as Inchinnan Business Park, Glasgow Airport and Braehead.

---

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Board members are asked:

- i. To note the content of the Johnstone and West Villages spotlight report attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

---

## **3. Spotlight on...Johnstone and the West Villages**

3.1 Following on from the spotlight report on Hillington in December 2019, this report continues the series with a look at Johnstone and the West Villages (the detailed report is attached at Appendix 1). Some of the key issues highlighted are, that:

- The area is home to quarter of Renfrewshire’s residents
- It has over 1,300 businesses, the majority of which are micro and SME’s, employing around 8,000 people
- Retail, manufacturing, transport and storage, health, education and tourism are key employment sectors and
- The pandemic has led to an increase in the number of Universal Credit claimants across the area and at a higher rate than the Council average.

- 3.2 The report also highlights key investments which have place in the area along with case studies of some of the area's key employers including Scottish Leather Group.
  - 3.3 Future spotlight reports will focus on, amongst others, Glasgow Airport, Inchinnan Business Park and Braehead. All of these specific locations contribute thousands of job opportunities for the local workforce and play a significant role in the Renfrewshire economy. These future reports will aim to investigate the specific impacts the pandemic has had on these locations.
- 

## **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
  - **Empowering our Communities** – The Spotlight reports will enable communities to have a better understanding of the economic performance of key areas within Renfrewshire.
  - **Jobs and the Economy** - The Spotlight reports on particular employment locations will allow members, the public and Renfrewshire stakeholders to better understand the scale and variety of employment opportunities and business activity that takes places currently across the area.
4. **Legal** – None.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

(a) The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not Applicable.
13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable.

---

**List of Background Papers**

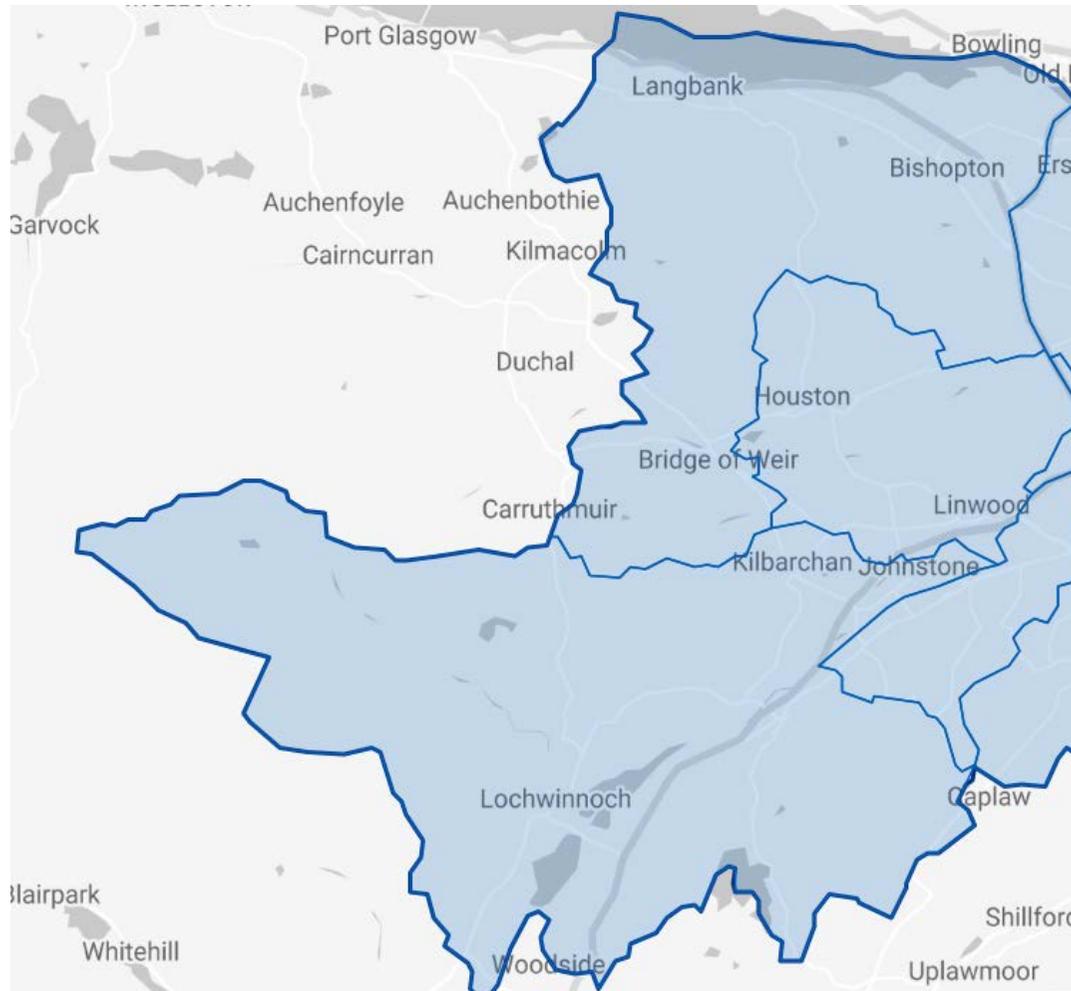
1. Report to Leadership Board, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019 – Renfrewshire Economic Profile (December 2019) and Economic Development Update
- 

*Author: Euan Shearer, Economic Regeneration Officer*

*Contact number: 07483 136235*



# Spotlight on...Johnstone and the West Villages



## Overview

Johnstone and the West Villages (hereby referred to as the Spotlight Area) encompasses a large area that includes the towns and villages of Johnstone, Lochwinnoch, Bridge of Weir, Kilbarchan, Howood, Houston and Bishopton. The purpose of this paper is to provide an economic context of the Spotlight Area, detail key developments taking place and to highlight some of its key employers.

## Key Statistics

### Population

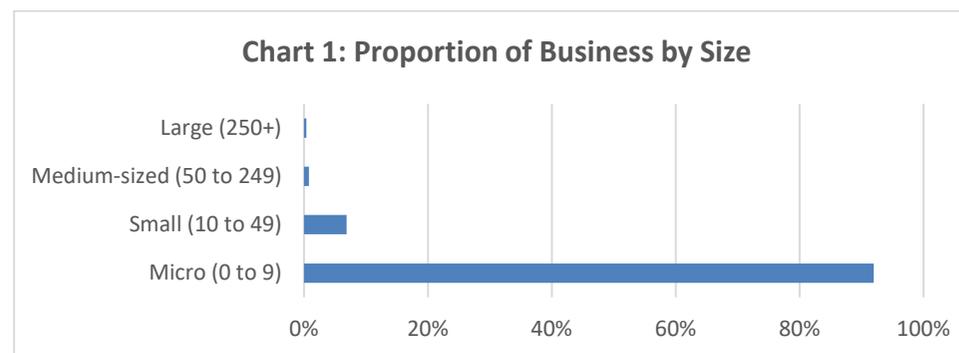
The Study Area has a population of 48,826 over a quarter of Renfrewshire's total population. Broken down by age bracket, the proportion of residents who are of working age (63%) is comparable to wider Renfrewshire figure (64%).

Between 2014-2019 the area's population grew by 5%, higher than the rest of Renfrewshire which grew by 4%. This is due to the significant increase in Bishopton's population because of the Dargavel Village development, which has gone from 5,000 to over 6,000 presently. In total close to 4,000 new homes will be built at the development by a range of different housebuilders including Cala, Stewart Milne, and Persimmon. The development has been supported with new infrastructure, including new link roads, a commercial centre, series of blue and green networks and a junction onto the M8 motorway. Future plans include the construction of new education facilities, a health centre and an extensive greenspace network including a woodland park. It is predicted that Bishopton's population could be close to 12,000 once Dargavel has been fully built out.



### Businesses

The Spotlight Area has approx. 1,360 business located in it. The vast majority of which are classed as micro businesses as stated in Chart 1. It has only 25 businesses which employ over 50 people, which highlights the rural, non-commercial status of the area at present. The area's largest employer is Scottish Leather Group (SLG) at Bridge of Weir.



### Employment

There are 7,985 jobs within the Spotlight Area, approximately 9% of Renfrewshire's total jobs. Chart 2 highlights the key employment sectors within the area.

Collectively, the retail & wholesale sector are the biggest employer, totalling over 900 jobs, generating over £28m in GVA per annum. The new retail development at Paton's Mill in Johnstone, highlights that this sector continues to receive significant investment in the Spotlight Area.

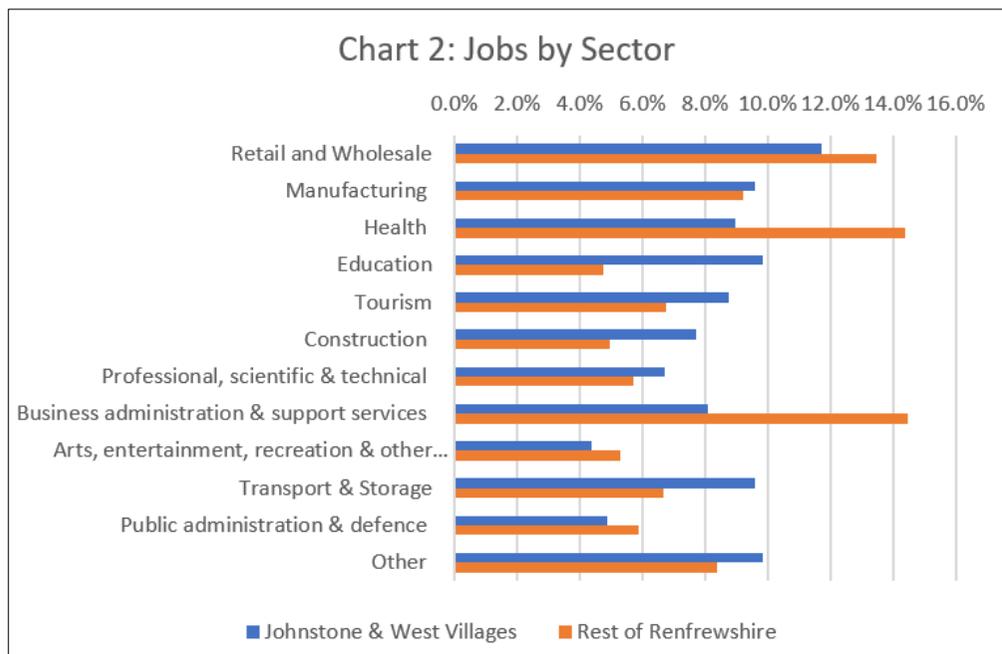
Transport & storage is another important sector, employing over 750 people, generating over £60m in GVA. A key employer is the Malcolm Group which has a main base of its operations located at Burnbrae near Linwood.

Employing over 750 people, manufacturing is another key sector generating over £65m in GVA per annum, 9% of Renfrewshire's total manufacturing GVA. Most of these jobs are with SLG in Bridge of Weir and Smith & McLaurin in

Kilbarchan/Johnstone, highlighting their importance to the Spotlight Area (more information on these businesses can be found in the Case Study Section of this report).

The public sector is also an important employer, with over 1,500 jobs in health and education. The proportion of jobs in education is almost double the rest of Renfrewshire average.

The importance of tourism in the area, with high-end accommodation providers such as Marr Hall, the Gleddoch Hotel and Spa, Ingliston Country Club & Hotel and the Lynnhurst Hotel, is highlighted by the fact that the proportion of jobs in tourism is higher than the rest of Renfrewshire average.



## Impacts of the Pandemic

As with all parts of Renfrewshire, the pandemic has impacted the Spotlight Area significantly. Several shops within its towns and villages have had to close (some permanently). Sectors which are important to the area such as tourism and hospitality have been particularly affected. It will be sometime before the full effects of the pandemic are fully understood.

Some economic indicators are already showing the negative impacts the pandemic is having. The Spotlight Area’s Claimant Count (which measures the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits) has increased dramatically since early last year. The latest claimant count is 1,480, 107% more than the March 2020 figure of 715. This is a greater increase than that experienced across Renfrewshire as a whole (76%). The Spotlight Area now accounts for around a fifth of all Renfrewshire’s claimants. All the major towns and villages in the area have been affected, with large increases noted in Houston, Bridge of Weir and Kilbarchan.

According to the latest 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) figures there were over 2,000 people in the Spotlight Area defined as being employment deprived, with pockets of deprivation in parts of Johnstone. This data was calculated prior to the pandemic and will very likely increase, with more redundancies/business closures and less jobs being available. It is imperative therefore, that the goals of the Council’s Economic Strategy and Recovery Plan are realised to mitigate these impacts.

## Connectivity

The Spotlight Area has good transport links, due to it being within proximity to Glasgow International Airport and the M8 motorway, which provide connections to Glasgow City Region and beyond.

## Investment in Johnstone

Johnstone has benefited from significant investment recently, including the £3m redevelopment of the former Paton's Mill. Phase 1 of the project's masterplan was completed in 2019, which includes a Starbucks drive-thru restaurant (2,300 sq. ft), and two new retail units occupied by Aldi (17,000 sq. ft) and Home Bargains (15,000 sq. ft) respectively. There is potential for further commercial and housing development at the site.

The Council have spent close to three quarter of million pounds in respect of monies received from the Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund. Projects supported include:

- Active Communities' repurposing of the former Johnstone police station as a new community health and wellbeing hub;
- The refit of four currently vacant retail units on MacDowall Street and High Street; and
- Public realm improvements including lighting enhancements at Houston Square, refurbished benches, and new hoardings for prominent gap sites at the corner of McDowall Street and George Street

Several properties over the last couple of years have benefitted from the Council's Retail Improvement Scheme. In total over £31,000 has been paid to commercial premises such as Colliers Bar, Oh So Beautiful and Subway to enhance their shopfronts.

## Summary

In conclusion the Spotlight Area is typified by:

- An area which is predominately rural in nature, accounting for over quarter of Renfrewshire's total population.
- A high proportion of small scale businesses.
- Retail, manufacturing, transport and storage, health, education, and tourism are key employment sectors.



- Pandemic has led to an increase in the number of claimants across the Spotlight Area, at a higher rate than the Council average. Likely that key sectors such as retail and tourism could be significantly affected with potential jobs losses soon.
- Johnstone having benefitted from significant investment recently.
- The settlement of Bishopton is experiencing a large increase in population as part of a managed expansion.



## Case Study – Scottish Leather Group (SLG)

One of Renfrewshire's key success stories, SLG is the largest manufacturer of leather in the UK. The company's history dates to 1758 when the original tannery started production. It has since grown to comprise of four leather manufacturing subsidiaries and a technology company, with its headquarters located in Bridge of Weir. Employing over 650 people, it is one of the major employers in Renfrewshire. In 2003, it adopted a 'zero waste policy' and this goal of being a highly sustainable business has remained since. It has the lowest carbon footprint of any leather maker in the world and is the only one to carry the Low Carbon Leather logo. The company has won multiple awards including Most Outstanding Business, Scottish and Large Exporter of the Year and a RoSPA Gold Award for its health and safety management systems. The company recently announced that it will be expanding its Renfrewshire operation creating a further 100 new jobs at a site in Paisley (on the former Chivas site) which will provide high-end car seat upholstery.



## Case Study – Smith & McLaurin

Established in 1849, Smith & McLaurin is a well-known in the labels, tickets, and tags industry, with a reputation for service, trust and innovation. The Kilbarchan based company has approximately 90 employees, making it an important employer in the Renfrewshire West Villages area. The company pride itself on delivering flexible and managed supply solutions for its customers.

## Ingliston Country Club & Hotel

Established in 2007, the 90 acre Ingliston estate is an award-winning equestrian, hotel, and conference & wedding venue. Employing over 100 people, it most well-known for its Equestrian Centre and is a three time winner of the British Show jumping Best Equestrian Facility award. Facilities include indoor and outdoor arenas, 24 hour security, all year turn out, solarium, horse walker and a lunge pen. Activities include pony clubs and parties, rides and walkarounds. Alpaca visits are available at certain events and time of the year.

The resort also comprises of a 30-bedroom boutique hotel, 13 Alpine lodges, some with hot tubs and saunas, restaurant and 3 wedding suites including a 500 + person capacity indoor marquee.

Taking advantage of its proximity to Glasgow Airport, it also provides conference facilities meetings, events, award ceremonies along with team building days.

It has also become involved in the filming circuit, hosting the cast and crew of Outlaw King and being on the TV show '4 in a bed'.

The resort has a strong focus on sustainability, including the largest single footprint of solar panels in Scotland, generating 70% of their daily electrical energy. They also have three polytunnels growing flowers and plants and are about to install Vehicle Electrical Charging points throughout our estate which will be free to use.



## Mar Hall Golf Resort and Spa

Formerly known as Erskine House, construction of the present baronial mansion, built in a gothic architectural style, was completed in 1845. It was previously used as a hospital until it underwent a £15m renovation in 2004 to turn it into a hotel.

Set in a 240 acre woodland estate, this 5 star resort has a wide range of amenities:

- It provides 53 rooms with a range of accommodation options, including deluxe bedrooms, suites, and lodges with outdoor hot tubs.
- Leisure facilities include the multi-award winning Decleor spa which has relaxation rooms, a full thermal suite, and a 25 metre swimming pool. On site is an 18 hole championship golf course located on the south bank of the River Clyde.
- Wide range of food and drink options including a fine dining restaurant, an Italian eatery, afternoon tea service and a lounge bar.
- A choice of four different wedding venues to cater for a variety of needs.
- Events and meeting space, with options for corporate days out, conferences, functions, and banquets.