

Federation of Small Businesses welcomes investment in City Region Deal

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) welcomes the investment which will be brought to the whole region in the City Region Deal to be announced later today.

✘ The body which represents individual businesses and companies say it will bring welcome capital investment and partnership working among the six signatory local authorities, but they warn that if the promised boost to our local economies is to be achieved, then it must deliver for small businesses across the region.

The FSB claim that information on the proposed projects has remained secret leading to the small business lobby group calling for details to be shared to allow small businesses to get involved.

However, the announced £120 million for improvements to the A720 Edinburgh by-pass is welcome news that will benefit residents and businesses across south east and central Scotland when completed. FSB would like to see a series of business engagement events take place across the region to share detail of all the proposed projects and allow business owners to capitalise on them.

FSB has expressed concern about the complex governance arrangements for city deals in Scotland, and their public sector dominance. During May's local government elections, FSB called for the appointment of an independent small business champion, embedded within each deal's Joint Committee, to

provide independent scrutiny, promote supply chain opportunities, tackle late payment and ensure local firms have their voice heard on key spending decisions.

Gordon Henderson, the FSB's Senior Development Manager, said: "Two years of hard work by a great many local government staff and politicians, past and present, has gone into getting this deal signed – congratulations to them all.

"It is absolutely vital that business owners in Peebles, Bathgate, Glenrothes and Dunbar feel the benefit of the deal's huge spending power as much as those in central Edinburgh to ensure the regional economy as a whole benefits. A small business champion with a voice at the decision making table will go a long way to ensuring local business are benefitting from this additional spending, they already contribute £15.4bn to the city region's economy so are vitally important.

"The Edinburgh city by-pass is a national traffic congestion blackspot affecting businesses and residents from across the region so, coupled with the already planned upgrade to the Sheriffhall junction, additional improvements are very welcome and I look forward to seeing what is planned."