

# Challenge to get people back to work



Mid Calder weir, on attractive spot in West Lothian. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Figures released by the Scottish Parliament point to radically different job markets in West Lothian's two Scottish Parliamentary constituencies.

The Almond Valley constituency of Angela Constance MSP has above average unemployment and economic inactivity whilst the Linlithgow constituency of Fiona Hyslop MSP boasts below average unemployment and economic inactivity and one of the highest employment rates in Scotland.

Garry Clark, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Development Manager for the East of Scotland, said moves to tackle these inequalities must recognise the central role that business growth has to play.

He explained: "The jobs picture in West Lothian's two constituencies could hardly be more contrasting.

"Linlithgow has the eighth highest level of employment in Scotland at 79.6 per cent whereas Almond Valley has one of the poorest at just 72.1 per cent.

Meanwhile Almond Valley's unemployment rate is the 19th highest in Scotland at 5.1 per cent compared to 3.9 per cent in Linlithgow.

In addition, almost one in four of the working age population in Almond Valley is economically inactive compared to Linlithgow where it is around one in six.

He added: "There are 18 per cent fewer businesses in Almond

Valley compared to Linlithgow despite its population only being around eight per cent lower.

“That means that there is significant scope to grow the business base in the southern part of West Lothian with recent figures showing that the number of businesses in Almond Valley has grown by 30 per cent between 2010 and 2016.

“We know that 87 per cent of West Lothian’s businesses are small businesses, employing around 18,000 people locally.

“If every small business in West Lothian was supported to create just one new job we could perhaps get all of the 4,100 local unemployed people back to work.

“That is the challenge that our local and national government faces and, with the right support for new and existing businesses, they must look to address this.”