

No funding for Edinburgh and Midlothian in round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund

Ten projects across Scotland did receive grants from Round Two of the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, however none of these was in the Edinburgh or Midlothian areas. The MP for Midlothian, Owen Thompson and the Council Leader for Midlothian have written to the UK Government.

Successful bids include a new ferry for Fair Isle, restoration of Kilmarnock's historic Palace Theatre, and regeneration in Stirling. The Scottish projects will receive £177 million from the UK Government's £2.1 billion fund which amounts to around 8.85% of the total. Basing this on population figures alone it would appear that Scotland is almost, but not quite, receiving its share, but there is more to it than that.

The successful applicants in the rest of the UK in a policy introduced by former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, were twice as likely to be in the south east as the north of England.

See the map below for the Scottish projects.

But the UK Government says the investment in Scotland will “benefit people across Scotland by spreading opportunity and breathing new life into historically overlooked areas”.

The ten projects in Scotland which will share in the £177 million from round two of the Levelling Up Fund.

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak is said to prioritise growing the economy with the policy of levelling up under the guidance of Levelling Up Minister, Michael Gove.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said: “It’s fantastic to see real momentum gathering as we level up across Scotland. This latest round of UK Government funding will see more than £177 million invested into 10 exciting projects which will breathe new life into communities across Scotland.

“Working with local partners we are boosting culture and leisure in Aberdeenshire, Galloway and Kilmarnock; improving connectivity in Shetland and Dundee; regenerating Greenock and Cumbernauld town centres; unlocking huge swathes of land for green development in East Lothian and Stirling; and helping communities in Fife connect with nature.

“We must and will continue to invest in initiatives that will make a difference to communities and help grow our economy. So far we have announced more than £2.26 billion – including the two Freeports confirmed last week – to bring prosperity and growth to Scotland that is crucial as we tackle the challenges associated with rising energy prices and the increased cost of living.”

In 2021 £1.7 billion was awarded to 105 projects including more than £16 million which will kickstart the Granton Waterfront project.

Edinburgh Council Leader 'disappointed'

The Council Leader, Cammy Day told the Local Democracy Reporting Service about his disappointment that the cultural bids made in Edinburgh were all unsuccessful. This has led to the refurbishment of the King's Theatre requiring a further £8.9 million urgently – within 35 days. [Read more here.](#)

Midlothian MP and Council Leader write to the UK Government

Owen Thompson MP and Midlothian Council Leader Kelly Parry have jointly written to the Levelling Up Secretary, Michael Gove, expressing frustration and disappointment that Midlothian Council did not receive a penny in funding from Round 2 of the UK Government's 'Levelling Up' Fund.

Midlothian had placed a Round 2 bid for important A701 corridor improvements, with support provided by Mr Thompson as the local MP. The council today received a brief letter from the Secretary of State for Transport Mark Harper MP and Minister for Levelling Up, Dehenna Davidson MP informing them the application had been unsuccessful, but that feedback was not immediately available.

The Midlothian politicians say that it was also notable that 69% of the levelling up funding distributed to Local Authority areas in England were represented by Conservative MPs, disproportionately representing affluent areas.

Mr Thompson said: "I am deeply disappointed that the UK Government did not invest in Midlothian through its levelling-up fund. This fund is supposed to help create opportunities in areas of the UK that have been disadvantaged, including Midlothian.

“It raises eyebrows when you see disadvantaged local authorities in Scotland, including Midlothian, missing out, while many affluent Tory seats were successful in their bids. The delay in receiving any feedback is also a poor show.

“This is not a transparent and efficient way to distribute funds to local authorities – it’s open to bias, forces competition and it leaves many councils wasting precious resources on failed bids.

“Funding for local authority projects in Scotland is far better distributed via the Scottish Government, assessing need and following due process, instead of this flawed and politicised process.

Ms Perry said: “I am surprised and frustrated that Midlothian Council’s bid for support with the A701 corridor was unsuccessful. It was a well-thought out project that meets the criteria for the fund. I know how much work went into the application and it would have brought much-needed improvements to local transport infrastructure, to the benefit of Midlothian communities.

“The number of affluent Tory seats who were successful certainly seems strange for a fund that is supposed to increase opportunities in disadvantaged areas. It’s a poor show that not a word in feedback has been provided and I shall certainly be following this up to see why Midlothian’s bid was rejected. If the UK Government is genuinely committed to ‘levelling up’ they have to demonstrate that a level playing field applies when these decisions are made, otherwise there’s more than a whiff of cronyism about it.”



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Projects in Scotland awarded Levelling Up Fund grants in round 2 include these:

- £27 million has been guaranteed for a new roll-on, roll-off ferry for Fair Isle. The service is a lifeline for the island, supporting its residents, visitors and supply chains, and without its replacement the community will become further isolated.
- In Aberdeenshire, £20 million will transform Peterhead's disused Arbuthnot House into a new museum, library and cultural hub, while the popular marine aquarium in Macduff will be modernised and expanded.
- There is £20 million to fund the refurbishment of 163-year-old Palace Theatre and Grand Hall, and a new park near the town square in Kilmarnock.
- In Dundee, £14 million will go towards redeveloping a dated multi-storey car park into a sustainable transport hub, creating 350 electrical vehicle charging points, car share spaces, and an e-bike hire scheme.

- Nearly £20 million will help demolish and reroute the A78 dual carriageway to reconnect and transform Greenock town centre into a modern, vibrant hub based around public squares and green spaces.
- In Stirling, more than £19 million will go towards the regeneration of the Forthside area, helping to create 1,000 new jobs.
- more than £19.4 million to accelerate the regeneration of Riverside Park in Fife and improve access to the River Leven with new walking routes.
- In Cumbernauld, more than £9 million will support the demolition and regeneration of two failing shopping centres and a vacant office block, helping to bring education, employment and homes into the heart of North Lanarkshire's largest town.
- In East Lothian, nearly £11.3 million of funding will help free up land at a former coal fired power station for future, green regeneration.
- Almost £18 million will help Dumfries and Galloway turn redundant spaces and buildings into exciting new cultural and leisure opportunities.