



**Boosting local
economies: a
community wealth
building report for
the Federation of
Small Businesses
Scotland**

Final Report

July 2025



CLEES

the national organisation
for local economies



Federation of
Small Businesses

About the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

CLES is the national organisation for [local economies](#).

Established in 1986, we are an independent charity working towards a future where local economies benefit people, place and the planet.

This will happen when wealth and power serve local people, rather than the other way around, enabling communities to flourish. We have an international reputation for our pioneering work on community wealth building. We supported the development of community wealth building pilots in Scotland and are recognised as the curators of the movement in the UK.

Community wealth building is a holistic approach to economic development which includes procurement, alongside land and assets, employment, finance and is underpinned by greater democratic ownership of the economy.

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**Project Introduction
and Key Findings
Summary**

Project Introduction

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Scotland commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLEES) to investigate current procurement practices from within local government to their members.

The FSB were particularly interested in understanding how a community wealth building (CWB) approach to procurement has been undertaken in local authorities (LAs), what other procurement practices have been trialled and how accessible data is in relation to procurement from SMEs.

In light of a recently updated public sector procurement strategy, alongside proposed CWB legislation, understanding how CWB has been integrated into procurement practices already is essential to ensure the legislation can be utilised effectively and supports FSB members.

The project took a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis with a focus on seven local authorities (Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Fife and North Lanarkshire Councils) as case studies to better understand current procurement practice. In the following slides we set out the methodology, the quantitative economic analysis, case studies and findings from focus groups before reaching conclusions and recommendations.

Project Aims

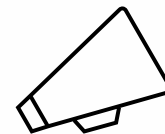
The project set out to:



- Understand the scale of procurement with SME enterprises in Scotland, with a particular focus on understanding procurement with micro enterprises.



- Investigate different approaches to procurement taken by local authorities, with a particular focus on community wealth building practices.



- Offer recommendations to the FSB for areas of best practice which could shape future community wealth building activity around procurement in relation to their members.

A note about data

The availability of procurement data through Tussell has limited the scale and scope of this research. Beyond the perennial challenges of data availability and completeness, not all LAs have data available through Tussell, particularly in relation to 'total spend' data. This has been reflected in the LAs then chosen to look more closely into. Originally, the research had planned to investigate The Highland Council as the largest geography and Glasgow City Council as the largest urban centre, but neither had available data due to non-response to FOI requests.

Whilst the reporting of procurement activity in Scotland through annual procurement reports is incredibly valuable, as are the data held through the Improvement Service and Scottish Procurement Information Hub, making this data more available publicly to enable interrogation would be helpful, particularly for organisations looking to go beyond the headline reporting. The data within the annual procurement reports however, was not uniform. By this we mean that, some procurement reports include full expenditure data whilst others focus solely on social care statistics for example. There needs to be greater uniformity between the procurement reports and the data within them needs to be made publicly available.

Key Findings Summary



Key Findings Summary

- The research has shown that taking a CWB approach to procurement does have benefits for SMEs, particularly in the Micro and Small category, although this cannot always be seen from annual analysis. Instead, longitudinal study is required.
- There are many factors which influence procurement contract and total spend. Having consideration for geographic and demographic factors within LAs is imperative when assessing the procurement data and determining 'good practice'.
- The focus group discussions highlighted a disconnect between the procurement aspirations within LAs and the barriers still felt on the ground through complicated and often not inclusive procurement practices.
- Capacity was highlighted from both within the public sector and within SMEs as a challenge in relation to undertaking procurement, lotting contracts, applying for opportunities and then monitoring benefits. Aspirations to grow local and SME procurement within CWB needs to be mindful of the additional time and energy this may take, from all concerned.
- CWB legislation alone will not ensure greater local and SME procurement will take place. Amendments to the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 may be required to develop this aspiration and support Scotland's SMEs.



Project Brief, Process, Methodology and Definitions

Project Brief, Process and ~~Definitions~~

Project Brief

The overall aim of the research was to understand the procurement challenges and opportunities from within local authorities in Scotland, and how these impact upon FSB members.

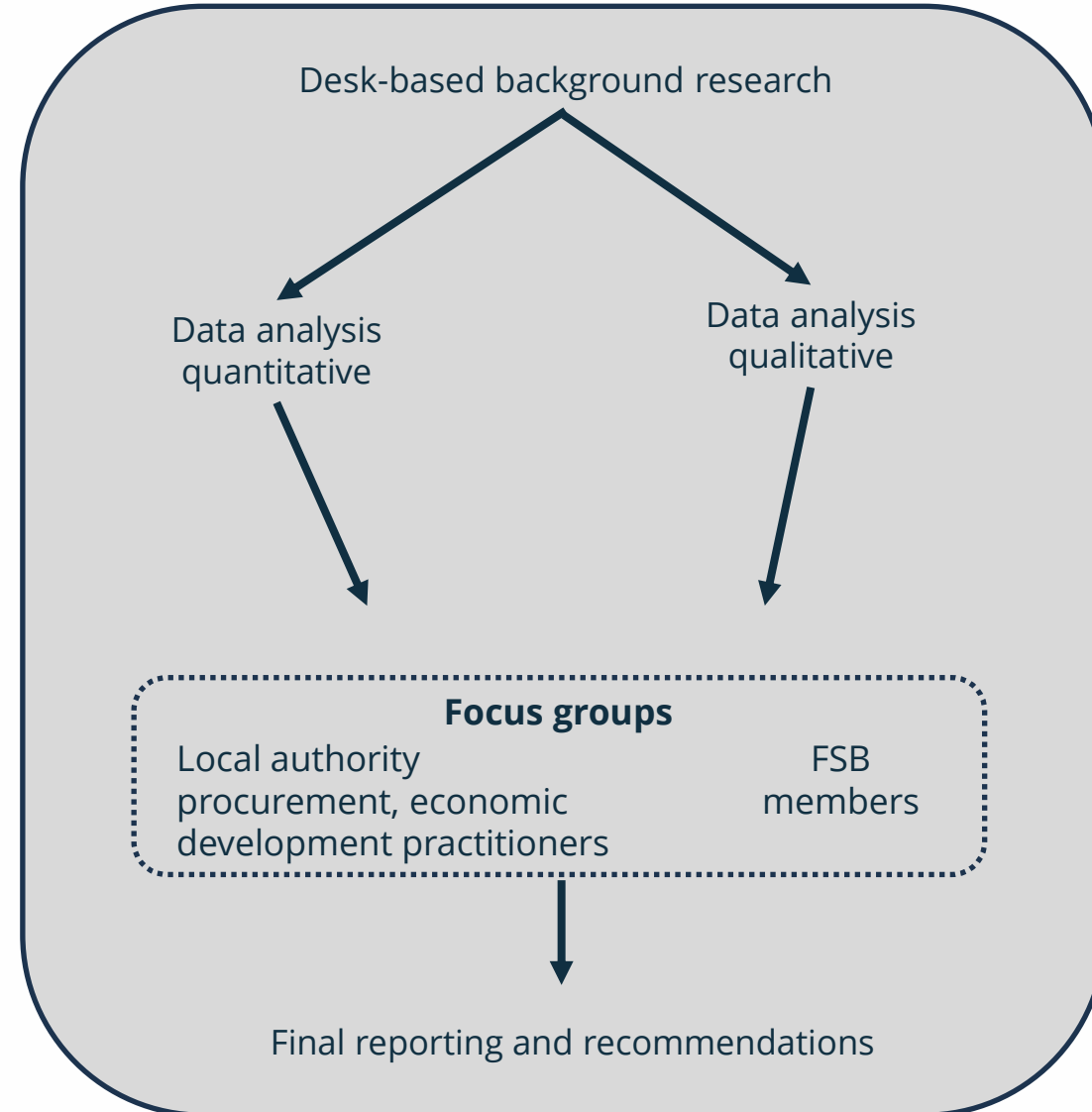
Analysis took both a quantitative and qualitative approach using data sets from Tussell and Data City, combined with local authority annual procurement reports with a focus on seven local authorities.

Engagement was a key feature of the process and focus groups were held online to discuss local government approaches to procurement and the quantitative data findings.

The project took a four-stage approach;

1. Background research
2. Data analysis
3. Focus groups
4. Reporting and recommendations

Process



Economic Data Analysis Methodology and Project Definitions

Economic Data Analysis Methodology

The contract value and spend data used in this analysis was gathered from Tussell. Tussell is a large UK wide database which provides data on procurement, including on Local Authority (LA) overall spend, alongside contract spend. Whilst this is one of the most consistent data providers on government spend, this data is not perfect. As Tussell gathers this data through FOI requests to LAs, there can sometimes be gaps in the data. Furthermore, some LAs do not provide spend data for contracts under a certain value. Whilst there may be some data which is incomplete, it can give an insight into patterns within a LA's spending.

LA total spend and contract spend with suppliers extends to both the private and public sector. Given this analysis is aimed at assessing LA spend with SMEs, only private sector suppliers are included within this assessment. All spending on the public sector, further and higher education, school and charitable procurement activity have been removed from the total spend and contract value analysis.

SME size can be defined by two modes, either turnover or employee size. Whilst Tussell does provide some data on SMEs there are many gaps within the data, additionally the data does not split SMEs by size, which was a key ask of this analysis. Therefore, more robust data on the size of businesses was used from Data City, Data City provides data on the finances of businesses across the UK, however, they also provide more robust and accurate turnover and employee estimates. When comparing the data on employee size to turnover size from Data City, the turnover size had fewer data gaps, therefore, businesses have been categorised by size based on turnover in this analysis.

Originally other LAs were chosen as the focus of this research (including Glasgow), however, the data was not fully available for these local authorities. According to Tussell, this is in part as a result of local authorities not legally being required to publish invoice data within Scotland.

It is worth acknowledging that whilst having a registered address in a LA may indicate local spend, there are instances where this does not occur, and some businesses may well be registered in multiple locations with minimal local employment or spend occurring from regional bases.

Definitions

Private Sector Data - All data provided within this analysis, both total spend data and contract awards data includes private sector data only. All businesses were defined by Tussell, those included are: Foreign Companies, Joint Venture, Limited Liability partnership, Non-limited, Non-profit organisation, private limited/unlimited and public limited companies.

Contract Awards Data - Contracts data represent the total lifetime of value of a contract agreement, as defined by Tussell. For instance, if a contract was awarded for services over a 2-year period, contract awards will attribute the whole value to the year the contract was awarded.

Total Spend Data - Tussell defines spend data as payments to suppliers, each transaction is a record of how much a supplier has directly been paid by a public sector body. The Spend data provided by Tussell is invoice-level data which shows the payment over the scope of the agreement.



Scotland Economic and Procurement Context

Economic and Procurement Context

Procurement Legislation and Strategy

In 2012 CLES undertook [research](#) analysing the relationship between local authority procurement processes and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK. The survey was distributed to local government procurement practitioners and highlighted both the opportunity and challenges which were faced in procuring with SMEs. This research formed part of the evidence base which led to the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act was designed to improve reporting and transparency, promote sustainability and simplify the process for small businesses, third sector organisations, and supported businesses to participate in public procurement.

The Scottish Government launched a new [Public Procurement Strategy for Scotland 2023-2028](#) which encourages local authorities to consider “how procurements are conducted and contracts are developed, to reduce barriers and enable participation for SMEs”. Alongside this, the strategy states that procurement can align with community wealth building (CWB) aims.

There are requirements for all local authorities to publish annual procurement reports detailing procurement activities and in 2024 an action plan for [SME and Third Sector Procurement](#) was published.

Economic and Policy Context

In 2013 CLES conducted follow on [research](#) for the FSB which pointed to the significant amplifier effect that small businesses have in and on local economies.

Alongside this, we know from [Scottish Government](#) figures that 99.3% of the 340,760 private sector enterprises operating in Scotland were SMEs, and of these 98.2% were classified as small (0-49 employees). Furthermore, SMEs provided an estimated 1.2 million jobs, accounted for 99.3% of all private sector businesses and 42.4% of private sector turnover as of March 2023. SMEs are the backbone of the economy across the length and breadth of the country.

Whilst the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) makes few mentions of SME's, they are at the heart of much local economic development activity and NSET does encourage their growth and development.

Since 2020 the Scottish Government has had a focus on CWB as an economic development policy, a key facet of which is targeting procurement spend to local and smaller organisations. In spring 2025 the Scottish Government announced new legislation on CWB.

As this legislation is progressing through the Scottish Parliament, the timing is perfect to carry out refreshed research for the FSB to understand the progress made in local procurement with SMEs amongst CWB pilot areas and other local authorities.



Economic Analysis

Contract Awards and Value

Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

The economic analysis focused on a deep dive into seven Scottish local authorities (LAs). These were selected based on availability and completeness of data and annual procurement reports, as well as a mixed selection of CWB pilot areas and those who were not, alongside density of FSB membership.

Analysis has compared spend within local authority, city region, Scotland and beyond. Not all LAs investigated are part of a city region. For the purposes of this analysis, Dumfries and Galloway has been paired with Scottish Borders Council as part of the Borderlands Growth Deal region and Argyll and Bute was linked with the wider Highlands And Islands authorities.

The following slides set out the economic analysis in relation to contract award, which as noted previously, in Tussell relates to the total lifetime of value of a contract agreement. This can be highly variable based on the contracts awarded that year and is not always the most representative measure of economic analysis.

Contract Award Summary Findings

- Overall, the seven LAs selected outperform Scotland wide LAs. This is despite not all having been CWB pilot areas or undertaking specific CWB related activity. A range of factors may influence this, from geography to specific initiatives.
- These seven authorities are more likely to contract private sector suppliers from within Scotland both in terms of the value and number of contracts. They also outperform Scotland on the awarding of contracts to private sector SME suppliers, again both in terms of value and number of contracts. Clackmannanshire Council awarded the highest % to Small and Micro enterprises at 60.82%.
- However, whilst an SME is more likely to be awarded a contract amongst the seven LAs selected, large companies account for a larger proportion of value of contracts. This is likely due to SMEs being less likely to have the capacity to deliver on larger projects which are more likely seen in contract award data. However, if LAs were to lot or break these contracts down, there may be more opportunities for SMEs to undertake them.
- Another significant finding of this analysis is that the contract data can be highly variable based what the LA is contracting for in any given year. For instance, high value transport or IT contracts, that are usually one-off payments (not annual), can lead to significant variations in where the value of contract spend is spent geographically and whether it is spent on SMEs. Taking a longer-term approach to analysis may have yielded different results.

Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

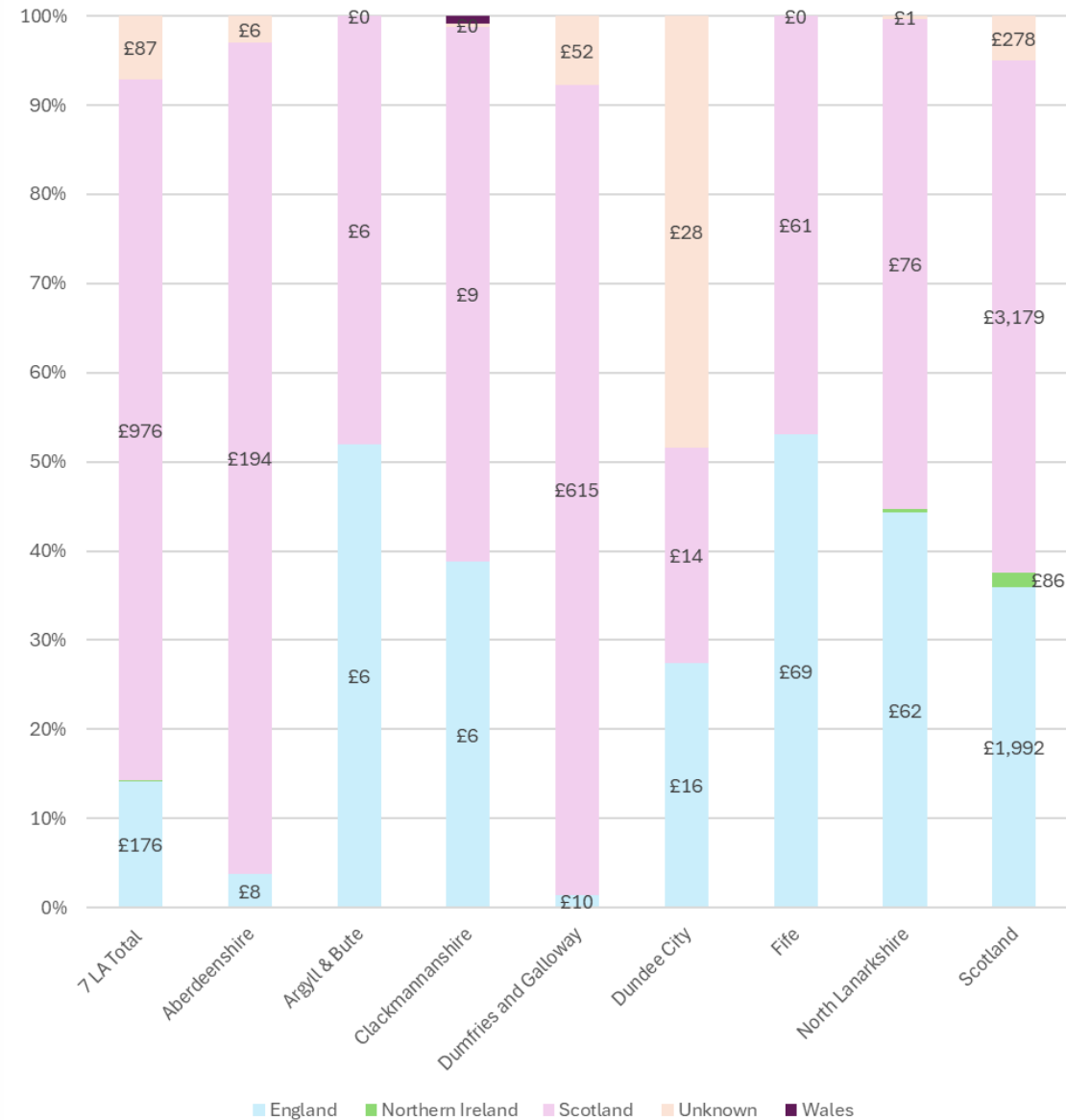
Key Findings - Value of Contract

Award by Country

The seven LAs outperform Scotland overall in purchasing from contract suppliers within Scotland.

- Across all local authorities in Scotland in the 2023/24 financial year, **57.4%** of **all contracts awarded by value** to private sector businesses, were awarded to businesses within Scotland.
- Comparatively across the seven LAs of study, **78.7%** of the total value of contracts awarded to private sector businesses, were awarded to businesses within Scotland.
- Across all local authorities in Scotland in the 2023/24 financial year, **55.4%** of **all contracts awarded** to private sector businesses, were awarded to businesses within Scotland.
- Comparatively across the seven LAs of study, **64.8%** of the total value of contracts awarded to private sector businesses, were awarded to businesses within Scotland.
- Despite neither Aberdeenshire or Dumfries and Galloway being CWB pilot areas, both have large spend in Scotland throughout 2023-2024.

Value of Contracts awarded by country



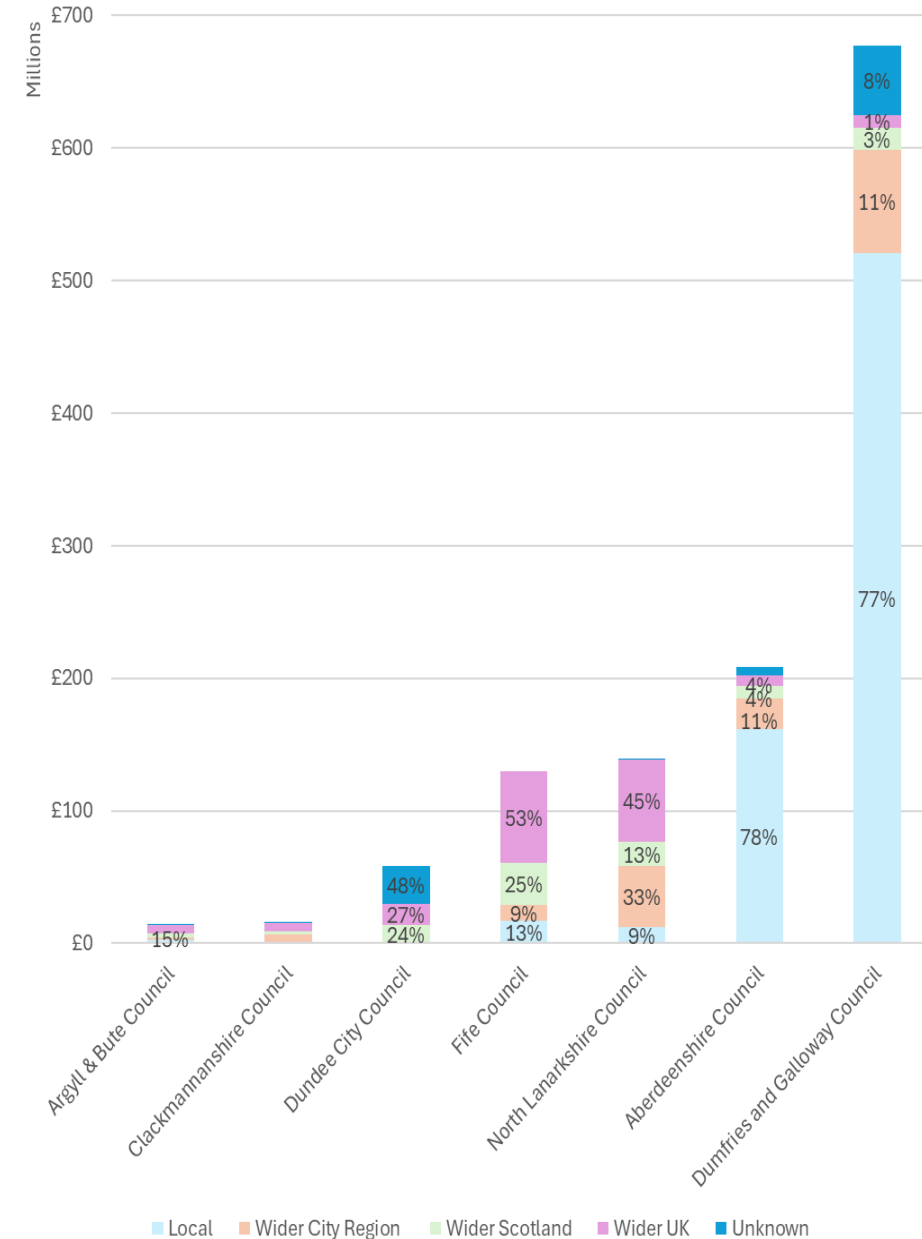
Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

Key Findings – Value of Contract Award by Region

There was significant variance in range of value of contract award in local and regional geographies.

- In 2023-34 Aberdeenshire awarded the highest value of contract spend within their local authority at **78%**. For other LAs, the proportion of contracts awarded to suppliers within local authorities was Dumfries & Galloway **77%**, Argyll & Bute **20%**, Fife **13%**, North Lanarkshire **9%**, Clackmannanshire **5%** and Dundee **0.1%**.
- Collectively Aberdeenshire Council spent **89%** in their local authority and city region area, Dumfries and Galloway Council **88%**, Clackmannanshire Council **45%**, North Lanarkshire Council **42%**. Argyll and Bute **36%**, Fife Council **22%** and Dundee City Council **7%**.
- The value of contract award ranges significantly and will depend on the types of work and services being procured during the 2023-24 period. For instance, Dumfries and Galloway awarded **£677m** in contracts in 2023-24, comparatively Argyll & Bute only awarded **£14.m** in contracts. Furthermore, thinking of the geographic scale of these local authorities it is worth recognising the need to procure locally and the supply chains which may already be in existence in some of the larger authority areas. Argyll and Bute Council is the largest geography in our selection at over 6900km with Dundee City Council at just 60km in geographic size.

Value of Contract Awards with private sector suppliers by region



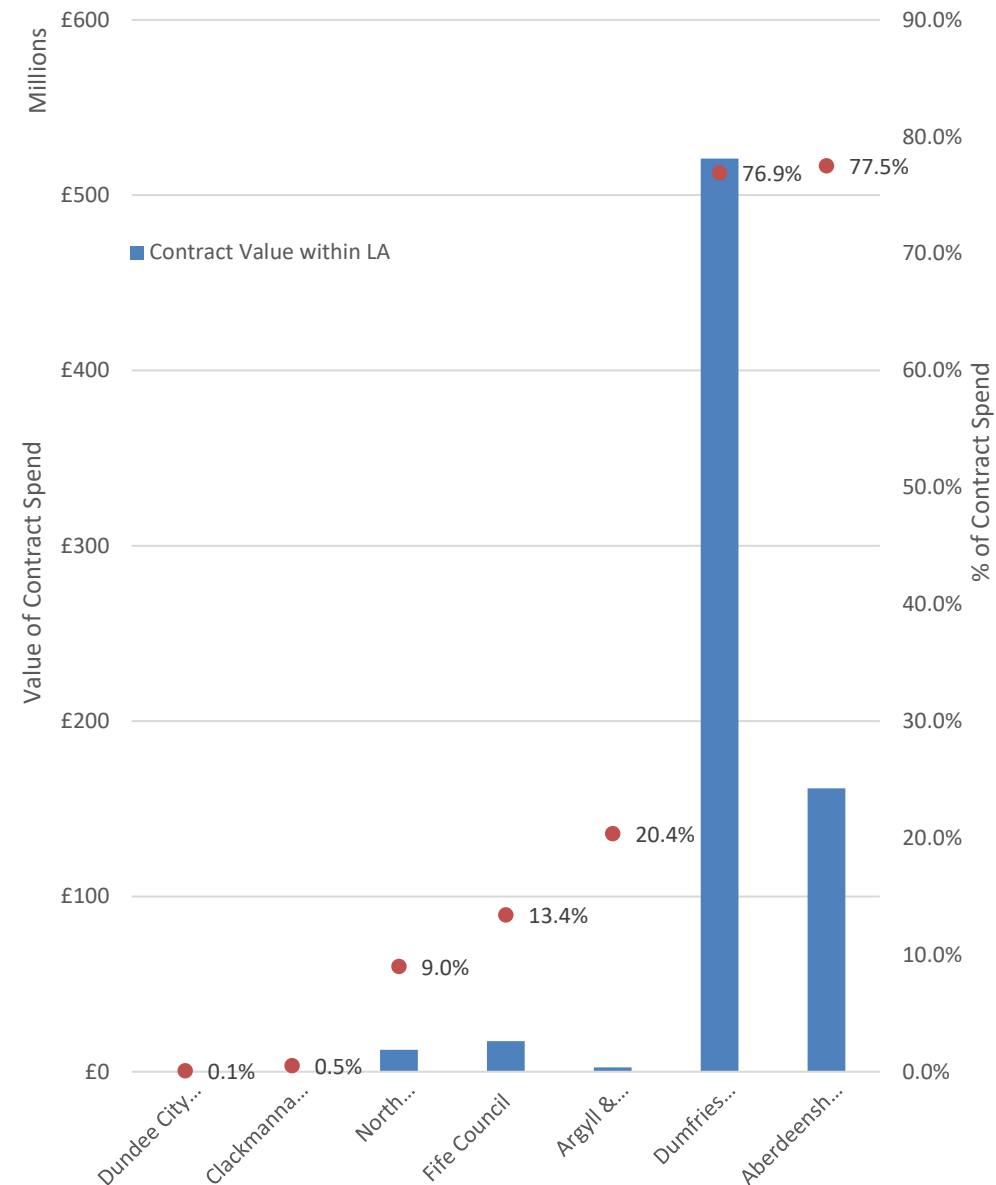
Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

Key Findings – Contract Award within LA

Contract value and award can vary significantly based on whether it is viewed nominally or proportionally.

- In the in 2023/24 financial year the council which awarded the highest proportion of contracts, by value, to private sector businesses within their local authority was Aberdeenshire at **77.5%**. Dundee awarded the lowest proportion of contracts, by value, to private sector businesses within their local authority at **0.1%**.
- However, it should be noted that the whilst some LAs spent a higher proportion of their total contracts with suppliers in the local authority, nominally they may not have spent the most. For instance, Aberdeenshire proportionally awarded the highest percentage of contracts locally at **77.5%**, spending **£161m** locally; however, comparatively Dumfries and Galloway proportionally awarded **76.9%** locally, but had higher local spend of **£521m**.
- Contract spend and total spend are different. Contracts taken out in the 2023/24 may not be spent in the 2023/24 year, the value of this contract may be spent over a prolonged period. Therefore, whilst contract spend locally may be low in 2023/24, the total spend overall may be high.

Value of contracts awarded to suppliers within contracting local authority



Data Source: Tussell, 2025.

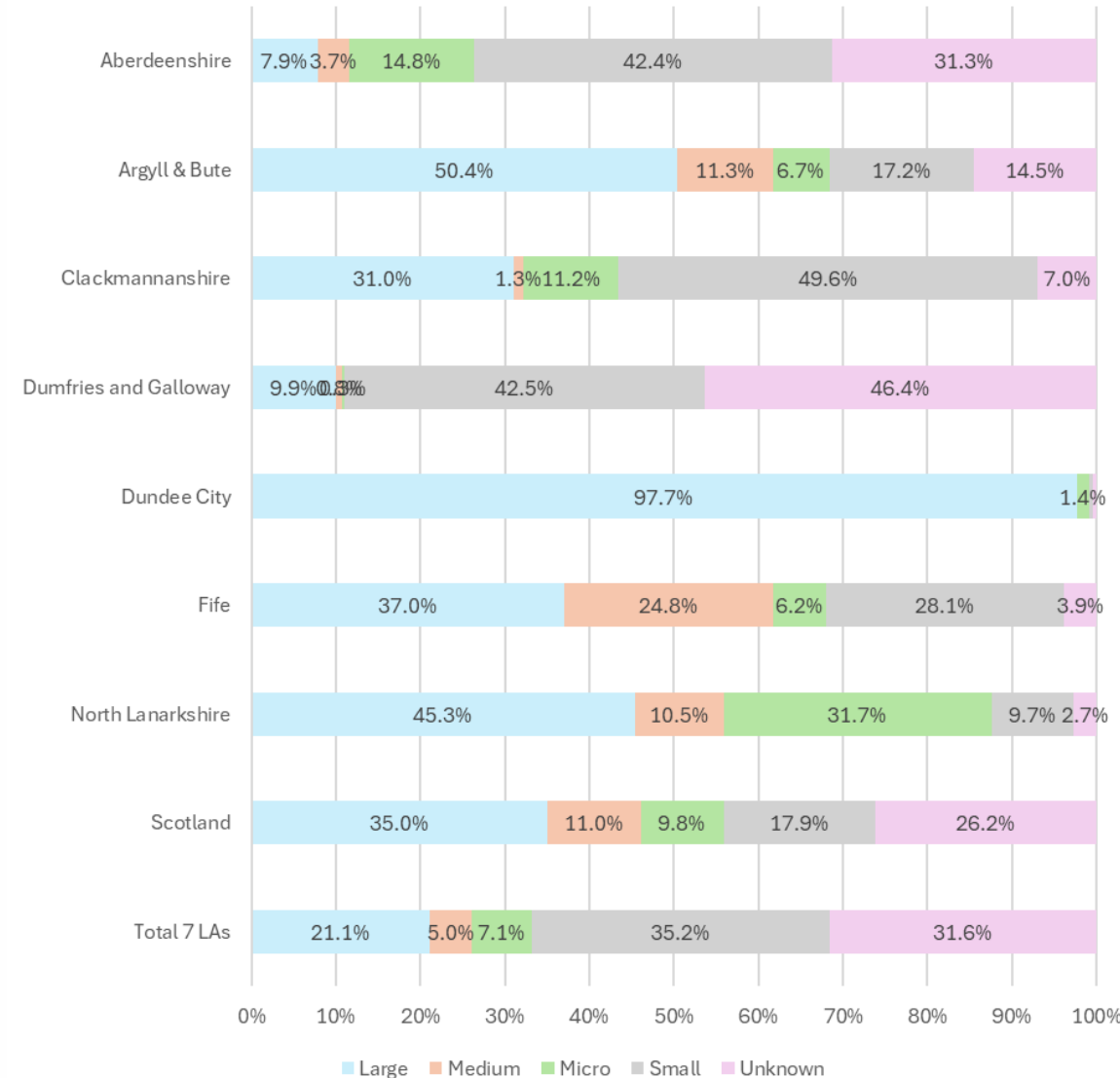
Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

Key Findings – Contract Awards to SME by Size

Clackmannanshire Council procured the most by value from Small and Micro enterprises.

- In the financial year 2023/24 across all LAs in Scotland, **38.7%** of the value of contracts was spent with private sector SME businesses.
- Across the seven selected LAs **47.3%** of the value of contracts was spent with private sector SME businesses, outperforming the Scotland average.
- Of these North Lanarkshire awarded the highest % to Micro businesses at **24.81%**, Clackmannanshire awarded the highest % to Small businesses, at **49.59%** and Fife to Medium enterprises at **24.81%**. Clackmannanshire awarded the most to Micro and Small businesses at **60.82%**.
- Across all seven LAs **60%** of all contracts awarded to private sector businesses were awarded to SMEs, comparatively, across all Scottish LAs this was **53%**. This may reflect the specific geographies, or size of the market in the areas selected.

Value of contracts awarded to SMEs by SME size



Data Source: Tussell, 2025 and Data City, 2025.

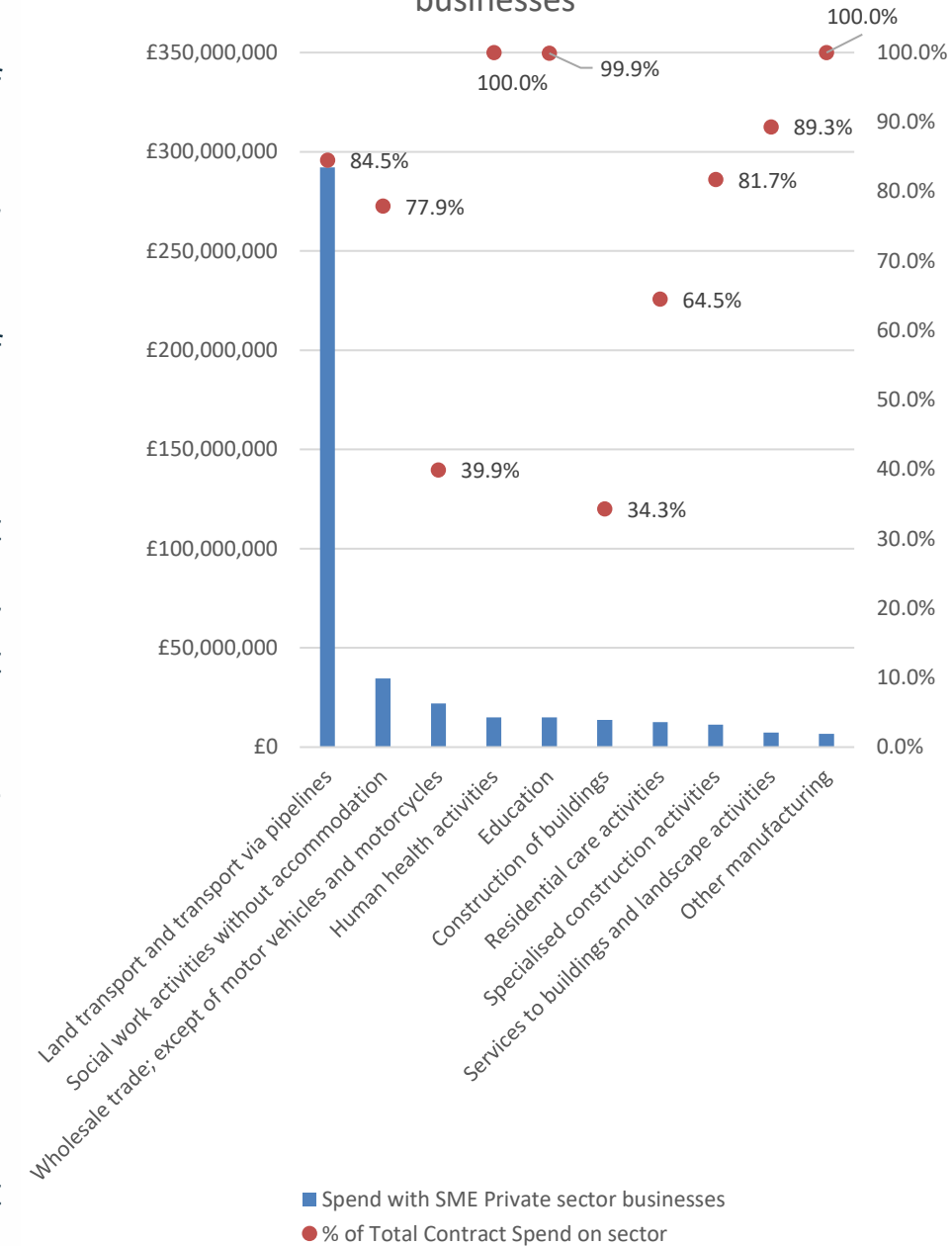
Economic Analysis: Contract Award Data

Key Findings – Contract Award by Sector

Within the SME spend in the seven LAs examined, Land Transport was the highest value of contract award.

- Across the seven LAs the highest value sector of spend was Land Transport, where **£292.2m** was spent with SME suppliers in the 2023/24 financial year. With **84.5%** of the total private sector contracts being awarded to SME businesses. This includes procuring vehicles, related services like maintenance and repair, and the transportation of goods or passengers.
- The second highest value sector of contracts with SME businesses was Social Work Activities (without accommodation), where across the seven LAs **£34.7m** was spent with SME private sector suppliers, with **77.9%** of the total private contract value in this sector being spent with SME businesses. This includes a range of activities like residential care, supported living, and community-based support programs.
- The next sector where there was significant private sector contract spend with SME businesses was Wholesale Trade (except motor vehicles), where across the seven LAs **£22m** was spent with SME private sector suppliers. In this sector **39.9%** of the total private sector contract spend was spent with SME businesses. This falls under indirect procurement, specifically concerning the purchase of goods for resale or distribution to other businesses.

Highest value sectors of contract award SME businesses



Data Source: Tussell, 2025.



Economic Analysis

Local Government Spend

Economic Analysis Spend Data

The spend data analysis utilises the same LAs (Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee City, Fife and North Lanarkshire Councils) as within the contract analysis and compares them to the same local, regional and national geographies as set out in the explainer on [slide 14](#).

The following slides set out the economic analysis in relation to Spend Data/Invoice Data which is a record of the direct payment between a contracting authority and their supplier in the 2023-2024 period.

Key Findings – Total Spend Summary Findings

- Overall, the analysis does not show significant difference between community wealth building pilot areas and other authorities.
- Across the seven LAs examined, the majority of their spend with private sector businesses was spent within Scotland, both in terms of value and the number of transactions, with **57.9% of the total value** of private sector spend being spent within Scotland and **49.1% of transactions** being with private sector suppliers **within Scotland**.
- Across the seven LAs **50.2% of the value** of spend was with private sector SME suppliers, with **49.5% of the number of transactions** being awarded to private sector SME suppliers. **LAs were more likely to procure from SMEs than large businesses**, with large businesses only being awarded 33.4% of the total value of spend across the seven LAs, and 24.8% of the number of transactions.
- On average across the LAs around a fifth of spend was spent with private sector suppliers from within the contracting local authority's geography. However, this did vary by local authority with some spending as much as third with suppliers from within their local authority. In part this variance can be explained by the complexity of the work that a LA is looking to procure for. The greater the complexity of the work, the less likely that there is to be an available supplier within the LA geography, similarly in the case with large or technical work. This could include large construction projects or restoration works.

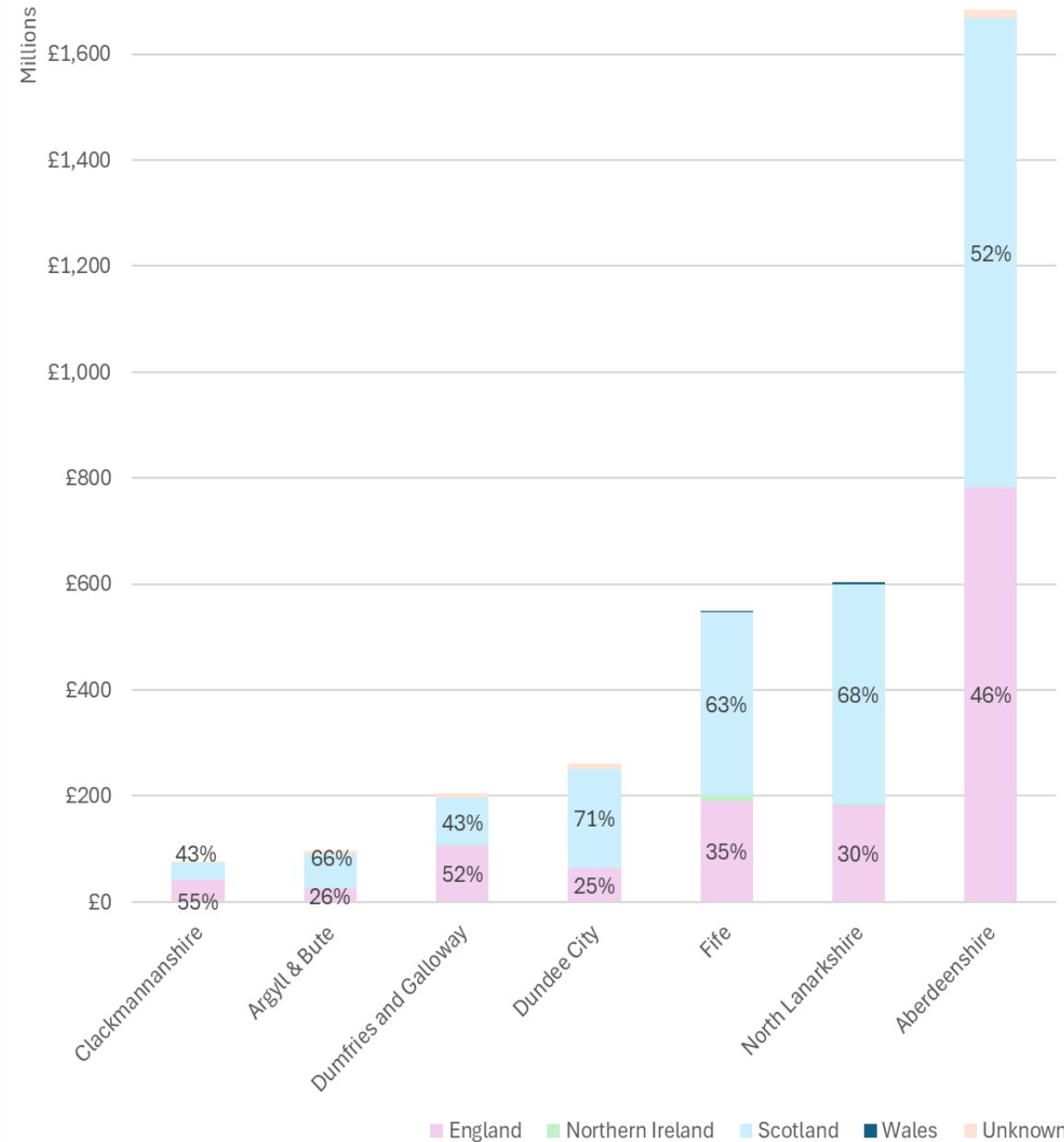
Economic Analysis Spend Data

Key Findings – Total Spend by Country

The local authorities individually spent anywhere between 43%-71% within Scotland with the private sector in the 2023/24 financial year amongst the local authorities investigated.

- **Dundee City Council** had the highest % of spend with the private sector in Scotland at **71%**. Proportionally **Aberdeenshire Council** had the highest value of spend within Scotland at **£884m**.
- In the 2023/24 financial year across the all seven local authorities **57.9%** of the total **value** of private sector spend was spent within Scotland.
- In 2023/24 financial year across the all seven local authorities **49.1%** of the total **number** of spend transactions were within Scotland.
- The value of spend is also worth noting across LAs and making acknowledgement of size and scale of spending patterns.

Value of transactions with private sector suppliers by country



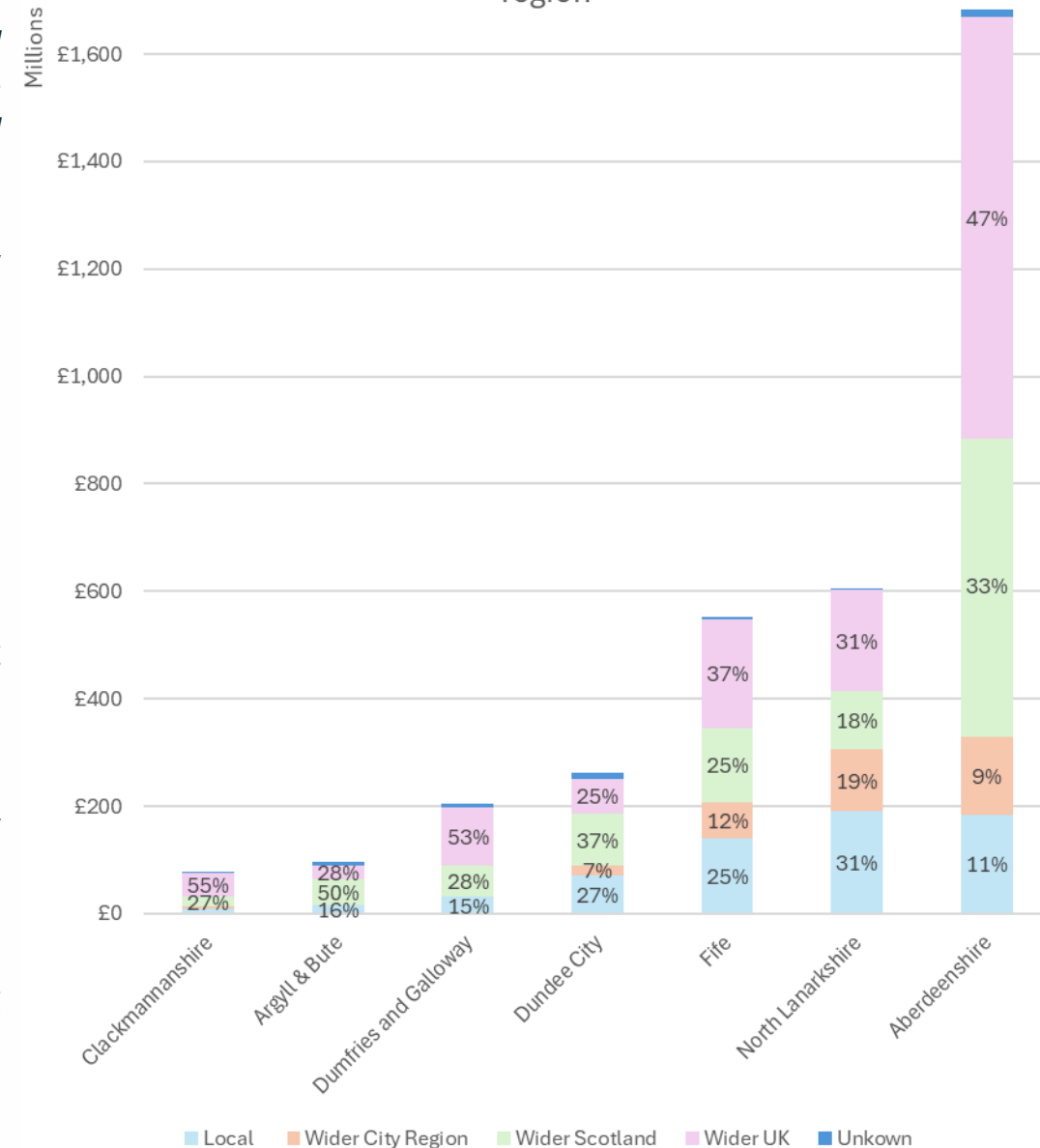
Economic Analysis Spend Data

Key Findings – Total Spend by Region

There was significant variance in range of value of spend with the private sector in local and regional geographies. North Lanarkshire Council spent the highest within their local authority and city region area.

- The range of value spent in a local authority in 2023-2024 was from **31% in North Lanarkshire Council** down to **11% in Clackmannanshire Council**.
- In terms of wider regional spend this ranged from **19% in North Lanarkshire** down to **5% in Clackmannanshire Council**.
- Collectively Aberdeenshire Council spent **20%** in their local authority and city region area, Argyll and Bute **17%**, Clackmannanshire Council **16%**, Dumfries and Galloway Council **15%**, Dundee City Council **34%**, Fife Council **37%** and North Lanarkshire Council **50%**.
- The value of spend is also worth noting across LAs. The 20% of spend within local authority and region by Aberdeenshire equates to a nominally similar value to that of the 50% of North Lanarkshire spend.

Value of transactions with private sector suppliers by region



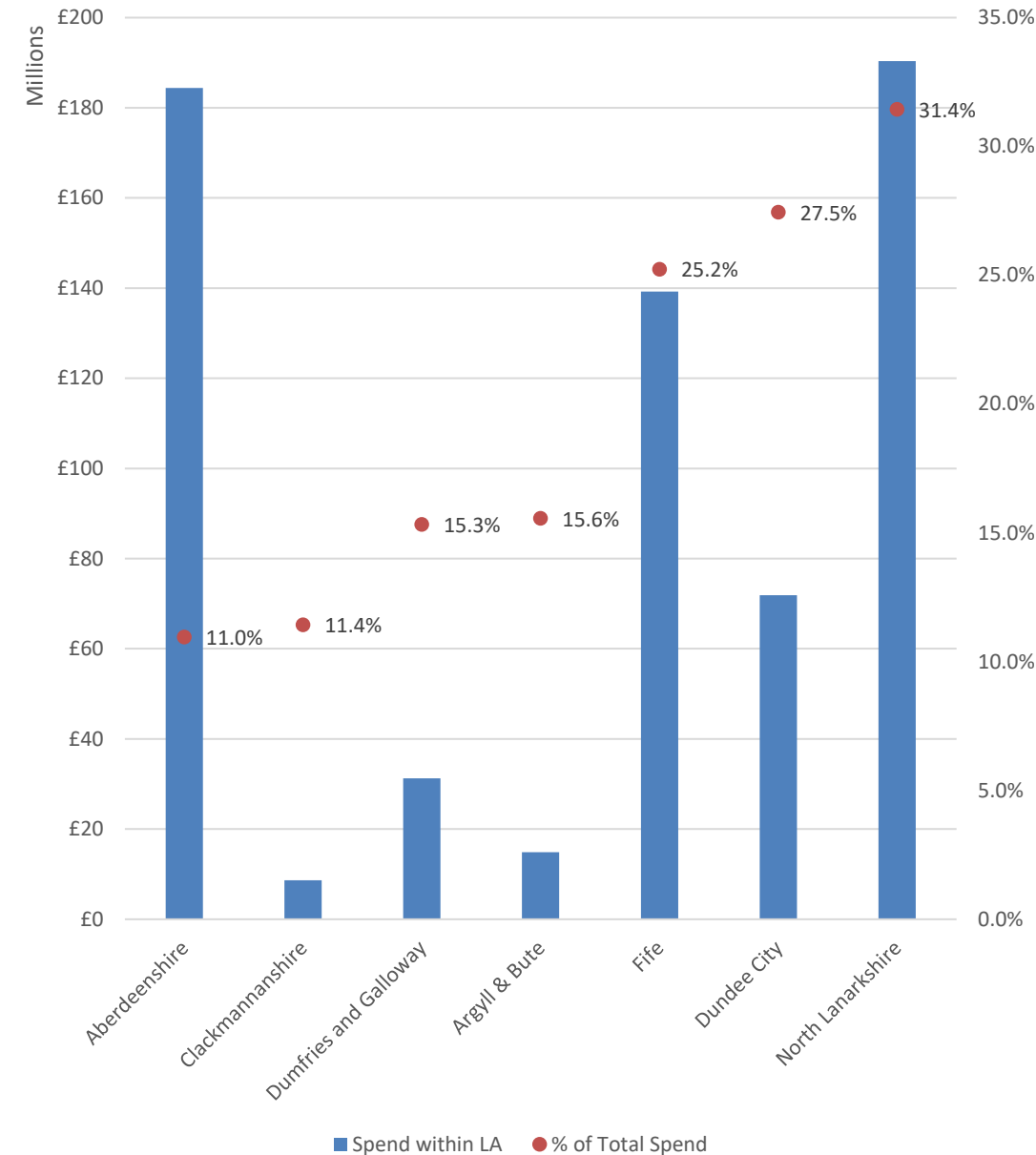
Economic Analysis Spend Data

Key Findings – Total Spend within LA

Contract spend and award can vary significantly based on whether it is viewed nominal or proportionally.

- In the in 2023/24 financial year the council which awarded the highest proportion of contracts, by value, to private sector businesses within their LA was **North Lanarkshire Council at 31.4%**. **Aberdeenshire Council** awarded the lowest proportion of contracts, by value, to private sector businesses within their LA at **11%**.
- However, it should be noted that whilst some LAs spent a higher proportion of their total contract spend with suppliers in the LA, nominally they may not have spent the most.
- As can be seen in the graph whilst proportionally only **11%** of Aberdeenshire's private sector spend was with suppliers in their LA, the nominal value of this spend was more than double that of Dundee, but proportionally **27.5%** of Dundee's private sector spend was within the LA.

Value of spend awarded to businesses within the contracting local authority geography



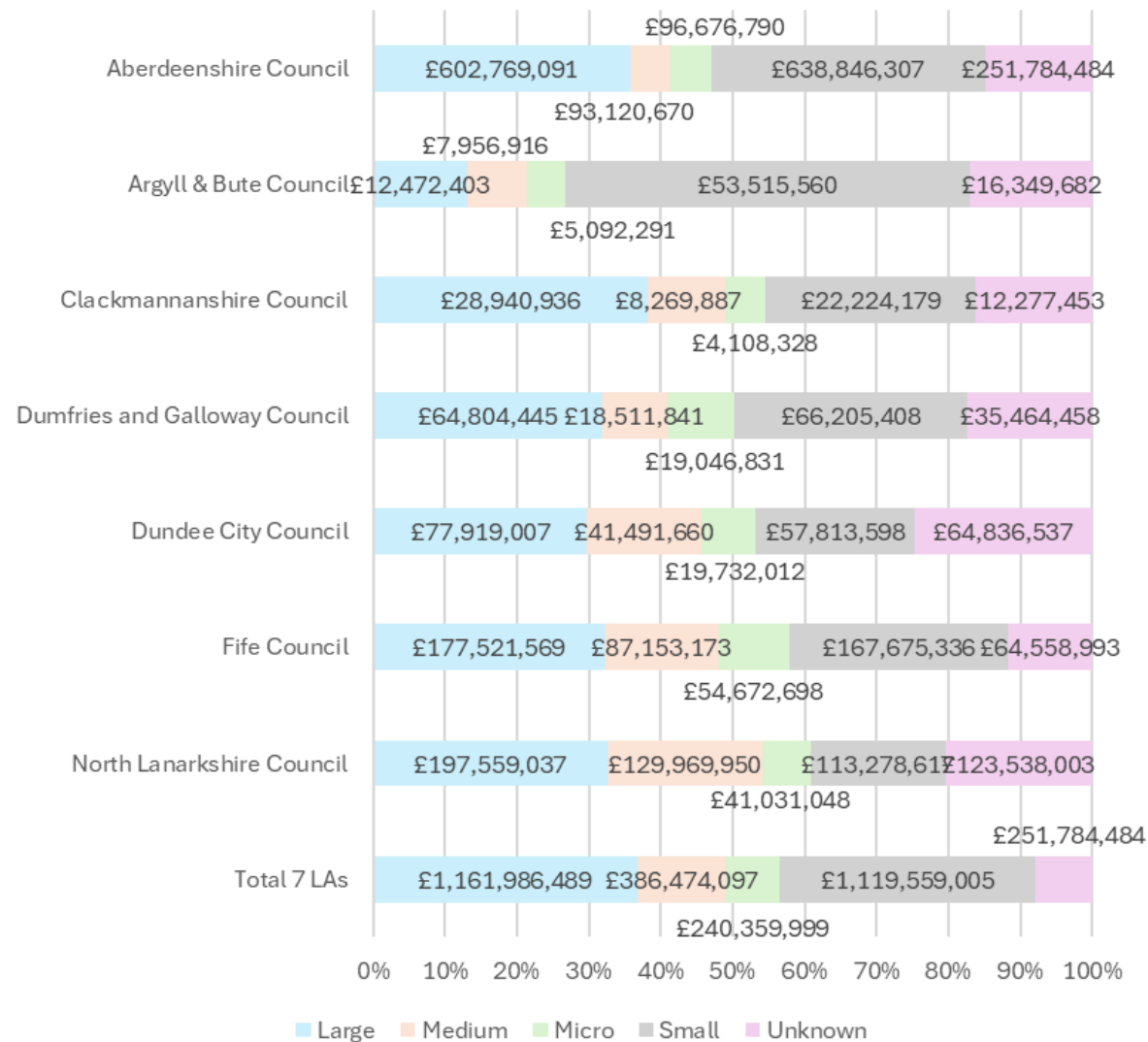
Economic Analysis Spend Data

Key Findings – Total Spend with SME by Size

SME spend was high with larger rural local authorities.

- In 2023/24 financial year across the all seven local authorities, **50.2%** of number of the value of spend transactions were with private sector SMEs. Across the seven LAs **33.4%** of the value of total spend was spent within large private sector firms.
- Of these Aberdeenshire Council awarded the highest value to Micro businesses at **£96,676,790**, and to Small businesses, at **£638,846,307** and North Lanarkshire to medium enterprises at **£129,969,950**.
- However, as a percentage of total spend Argyll and Bute awarded the highest to Micro and Small at 69.8%
- In 2023/24 financial year across all seven local authorities **49.5%** of number of spend transactions were with SMEs. Across the seven LAs **24.8%** of total transactions were with large private sector businesses.

Value of transactions with private sector suppliers by SME size



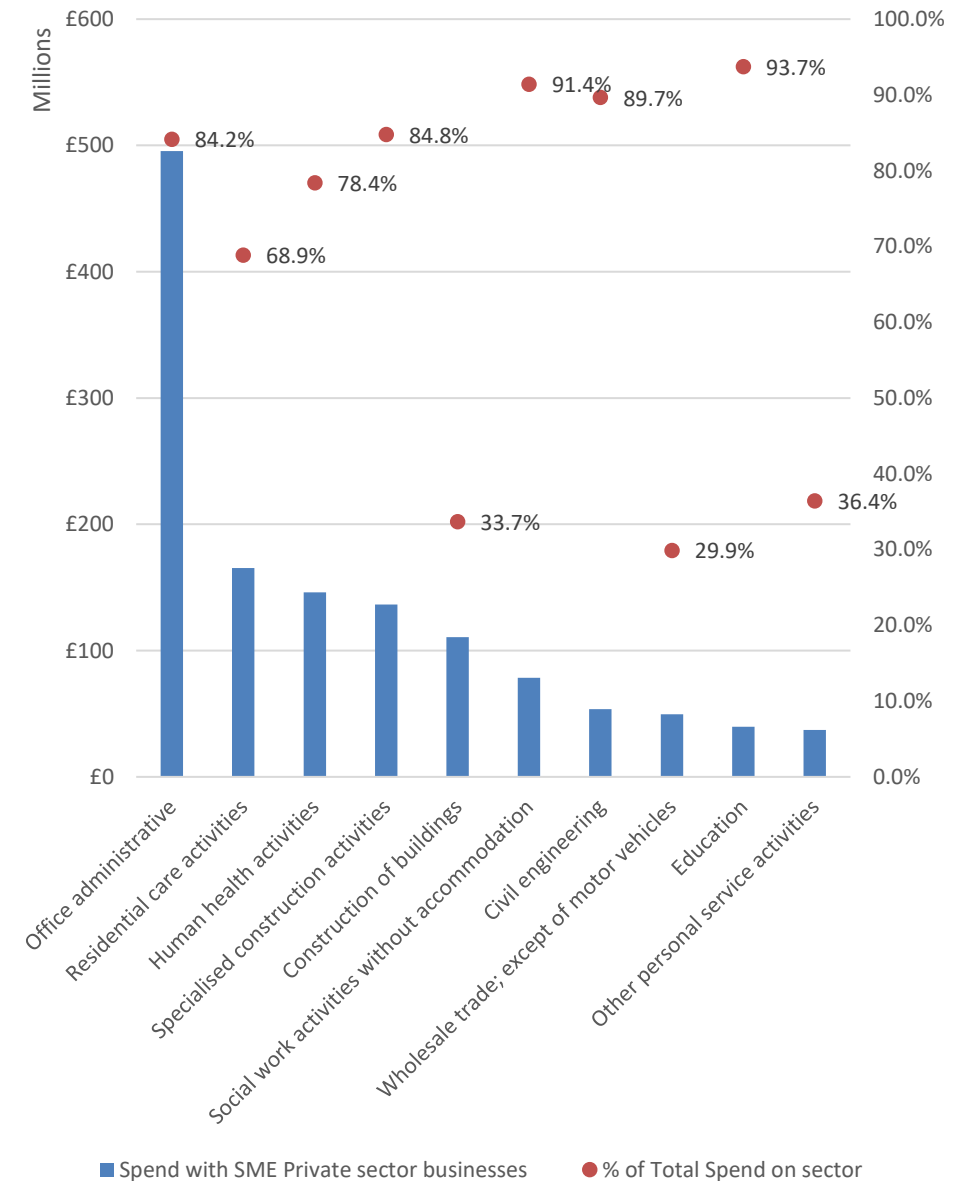
Economic Analysis Spend Data

Key Findings – Total Spend by Sector

Within SME spend in the seven LAs examined Office Administrative was the highest value of spend.

- The sectors where there was the highest value of spend with SMEs, across the seven LAs, was Office Administrative, where combined the seven LAs spent **£495.4m**. With **84.2%** of total spend with private sector office administrative businesses being with SMEs. This category typically includes items like office supplies, furniture, and various services such as cleaning, maintenance and IT support.
- The second sector in which the seven LAs spent the most with SMEs was Residential Care Activities, where combined the seven LAs spent **£165.4m** with SMEs. This accounted for **68.9%** of all total spend in this sector and falls under the broader categories of health and social work services.
- The third sector where the seven LAs spent a large quantity with SMEs was Human Activities, where combined the seven LAs spent a total of **£146.1m** with SMEs. This accounted for **78.4%** of total spend in this sector. This category encompasses the procurement of goods and services related to workforce management, including recruitment and training.
- These are fairly typical spend categories within local authorities but there may be scope to target future LA procurement activity.

Highest Value sectors of total spend with SME businesses



Data Source: Tussell, 2025.



Economic Analysis

Local Procurement Reports

Key themes – Comparison of findings with Local Authority Annual Procurement reports

As part of the analysis, the annual procurement reports across Scottish LAs were compared to investigate general findings around contract and total spend by local authority. However, it became clear that this would be difficult to complete:



- Not all of the LAs have provided annual reports, nor the same data, information and/or analysis within their procurement reports. For instance, within the report some of the LAs provide information on total spend, whilst other only provide detail on contract spend.
- Within some procurements the definition they used to categorise SMEs were not included and therefore, it was not known as to whether the businesses were being categorised by employments number, turnover or both and therefore, data comparison of these is difficult.
- Additionally, within contract spend, LAs under The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 only has to provide data on core trade, this being defined as: 'Suppliers with whom over £1000 has been spent in a 12-month period, that have also been classified as a health, social care, arts, political, religious or trading organization.' This means that the data may not include all contract spend, only include 'core' contract spend, and this may potentially be open to interpretation based on the above definition.
- Furthermore, it was found that the Tussell data did not perfectly match the procurement data, this is due to reporting inconsistencies already mentioned and not all LAs being required to submit their procurement data through FOIs to Tussell, usually due to exemptions – including Glasgow City Council.



Case Studies – Aberdeenshire Council

Procurement Context

Aberdeenshire Council

Procurement Strategy Background

Aberdeenshire Council's procurement unit is part of a shared procurement service with Aberdeen City Council and The Highland Council.

As such, each local authority is covered by a [Joint Procurement Strategy 2023-2026](#) which has six key themes. The final of these is Community Wealth Building or "how procurement activity can support Community Wealth Building, supporting local economic development, and redirecting wealth back into the local economy - placing control and benefits into the hands of local people".

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The [annual procurement report](#) discusses the commissioning process solely in relation to health and social care. Within Health and Social Care the Council has established Commissioning and Procurement boards to link work programmes, budgets and procurement plans with the Commissioning Cycle. The goal is to maximise best value, which may then be at odds with meeting other aims, for example supporting CWB.

Capacity Building

The council work with the Supplier Development Programme to help SMEs access and prepare for tender opportunities.

The council have provided tender training webinars and market engagement for frameworks to make them more SME accessible. These include:

- Minor works Framework
- Housing Repairs Framework

Lotting

The procurement report notes within Health and Social Care that contracts are divided into lots to increase accessibility. In relation to wrap around care this was delivered in lots representing the geography of the region – North, Central and South.

SME

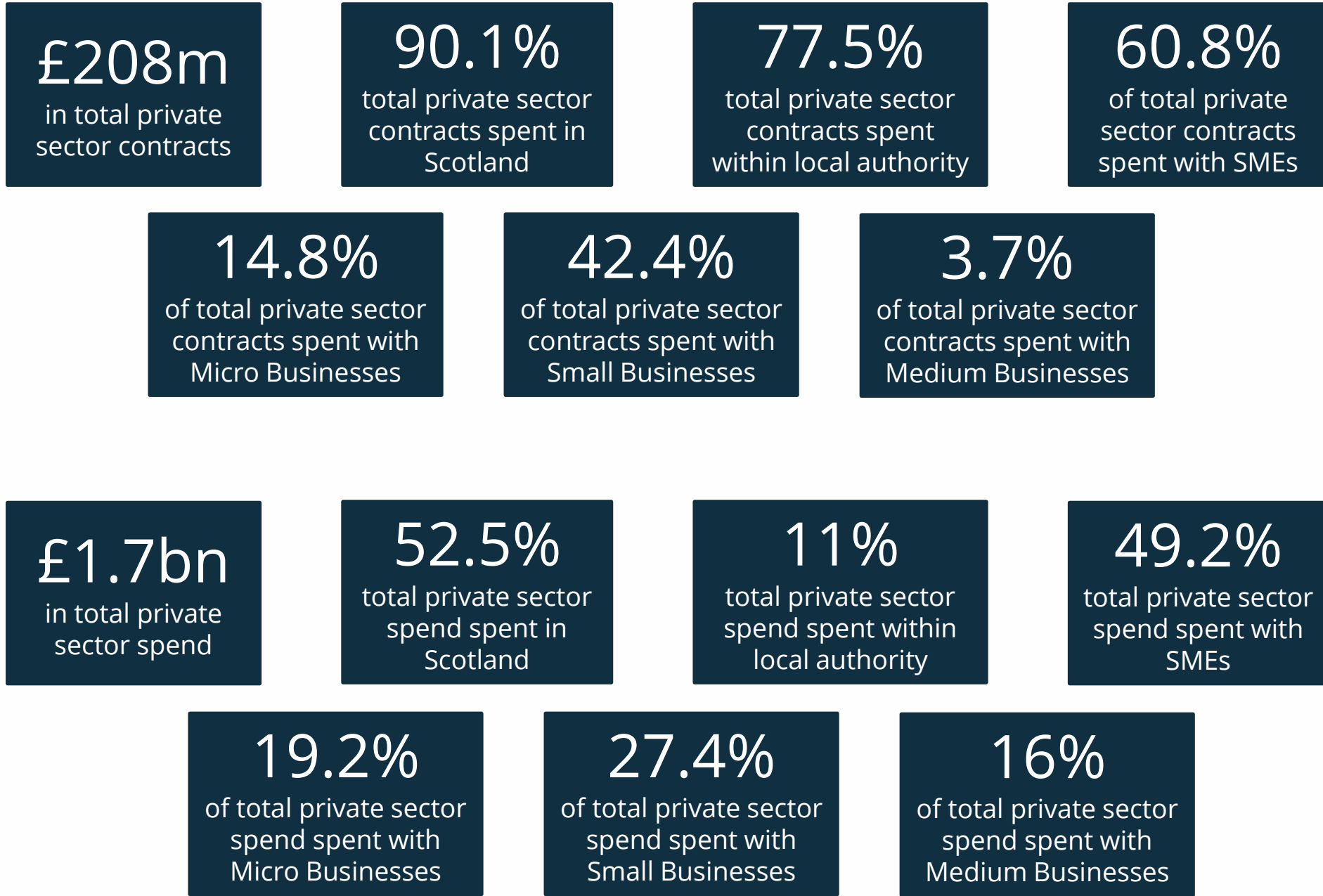
The council encourages SMEs to attend Meet the Buyer events – in 2023, 46 Aberdeenshire SMEs attended these events. For context there are a total of 9,911 SMEs registered in Aberdeenshire according to UK Data. Aberdeenshire Council have developed clear links between economic development and procurement to stimulate local capacity and interest in procurement opportunities.

Community Wealth Building

There has been a clear focus from the council in implementing processes which support local procurement and growing the local supply chain.

Economic Analysis

Aberdeenshire Council





Case Studies – Argyll and Bute Council

Procurement Context

Argyll and Bute Council

Procurement Strategy Background

Argyll and Bute has been delivering against a [2022-2025 Procurement Strategy](#), with a new Sustainable Procurement Strategy launched in 2025.

The previous report had a significant focus on recovery; post Covid and Brexit. The strategy had a key aim of achieving Value for Money, a sub theme of which encouraged collaborative public sector procurement to encourage Community Wealth Building.

The Council's focus for the 2025-2028 Procurement Strategy has Community Wealth Building as one of its five key strategic procurement objectives.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The 2023-24 [annual procurement report](#) makes note of the councils commissioning process and aim to 'improve procurement commissioning' by building capacity and skills within the council. The council makes use of a dynamic purchasing system which enables a wider group of suppliers to be sourced from.

Lotting

The council uses lotting, where appropriate, and dynamic purchasing systems to enable local suppliers the opportunity to access council contracts. In 2023-2024 76.5% included consideration of lotting

Capacity Building

The Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management Team (PCCMT) supports local organisations by structuring tender opportunities, wherever possible, to enable local organisations to bid for council contracts and by building their capacity to respond to formal procurements through local Meet the Buyer and other training events, and through promotion of the Supplier Development Programme (SDP).

SME

The council has worked to simplify tender documents and procurement processes to encourage more local SME participation. The report notes the council undertakes early market engagement, utilisation of the SDP and records instances of sub-contractor spend with SMEs to understand more clearly the impact of local spend in local areas.

The council has a high proportion of spend reaching SMEs. However, the procurement report notes the challenges over identifying organisational size, and location when reporting data.

Community Wealth Building

There is mention made of CWB in the annual procurement report. However, whilst referring to their work on CWB, it is not clearly articulated what activity falls under this category. The report does articulate that CWB activity is a collaborative activity and one for other public sector organisations to consider.

Argyll and Bute Council

£12m
in total private
sector contracts

76.5%
total private sector
contracts spent in
Scotland

30.4%
total private sector
contracts spent
within local authority

35.2%
of total private
sector contracts
spent with SMEs

6.7%
of total private sector
contracts spent with
Micro Businesses

17.2%
of total private sector
contracts spent with
Small Businesses

11.3%
of total private sector
contracts spent with
Medium Businesses

£95m
in total private
sector spend

66.5%
total private sector
spend spent in
Scotland

15.6%
total private sector
spend spent within
local authority

69.8%
total private sector
spend spent with
SMEs

12.7%
of total private sector
spend spent with
Micro Businesses

42.8%
of total private sector
spend spent with
Small Businesses

12.7%
of total private sector
spend spent with
Medium Businesses



Case Studies – Clackmannanshire Council

Procurement Context

Clackmannanshire Council

Procurement Strategy Background

Clackmannanshire Council were one of the original CWB pilot areas for the Scottish Government. Their [procurement strategy](#) ran from 2019-2022 and was supplemented by an action plan for 2022-2023. It had key thematic priority areas including making procurement 'straightforward', maximising 'local opportunities', 'strategic', and 'fair'.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The Council recognises that commissioning practice is related to corporate culture and to deliver positive outcomes in procurement the process needs to involve local suppliers. There is mention of encouraging 'two-way' communication between the council and local businesses.

Capacity Building

The [annual report](#) acknowledges the capacity required to undertake the Council's initiatives in progressive procurement, and that there is still some work needed in this area. The Procurement Action Plan notes multiple delays in priorities due to capacity issues, highlighting challenges faced internally in the council. There is no mention of raising capacity within the local supply chain.

Lotting

The annual report features examples of lotting contracts e.g. Print & Associated Services. This practice seems well embedded in council services and may be demonstrated through the significant expenditure locally with SMEs.

SME

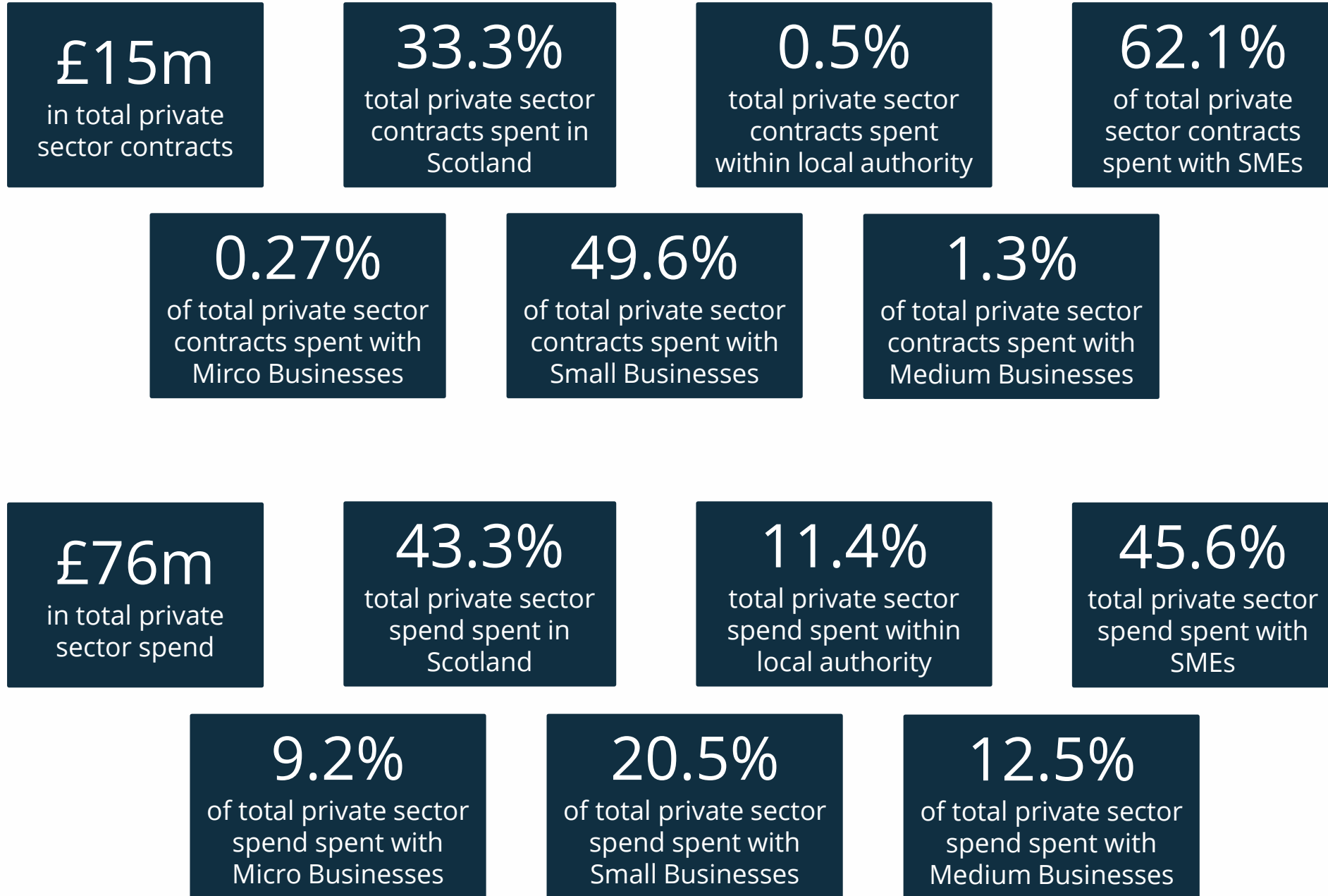
The annual procurement provides a definition of SMEs which is helpful to understand their classification and highlights the key statistics around expenditure with this group of business. It is clear from the 'variances previous annual reports' that expenditure with SMEs since 2018/19 has been increasingly annually with a significant jump from 19/20 to 20/21, possibly indicative of the adoption of the [Community Wealth Building in Clackmannanshire report and Community Wealth Building Action Plan](#).

Community Wealth Building

The report references CWB and the CWB action plan which contains a section looking at procurement opportunities in Clackmannanshire. Additional reporting takes place which maps the actions of the council against this action plan. The annual procurement report notes that the council is committed to CWB alongside community benefits and maximising economic and social regeneration objectives.

Economic Analysis

Clackmannanshire Council





Case Studies – Dundee City Council

Dundee City Council

Background

Dundee City Council launched a Procurement Transformation Programme in December 2022 including a [Corporate Procurement Strategy](#) that was approved by the Council. The Strategy's priorities and outcomes include value for money, achieving social, economic and environmental goals, and trading only with suppliers who behave ethically.

Dundee City Council have been on a CWB journey since 2021. They are embedding CWB throughout their corporate strategies and action plans and have been using the principles when developing their procurement approaches.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The [Annual Procurement](#) report mentions increasing engagement with local suppliers and simplifying procurement processes to enable participation.

Capacity Building

The report notes the council works with the SDP to support local SMEs to bid for tenders. They also propose early engagement to enable local enterprises to understand the forthcoming pipeline.

Lotting

Whilst the Council aims to ensure that contract requirements are always proportionate to contract size and complexity and risk, they note they will also seek to divide larger contracts into lots to allow smaller suppliers the opportunity to bid.

SME

The report cites the regulatory framework aim of equal access to contracts across the UK and encourages the participation by local companies within ambitions of local economic growth and CWB. The Council engages with local companies and organisations including participating in the annual Tayside 'Meet the Buyer' event.

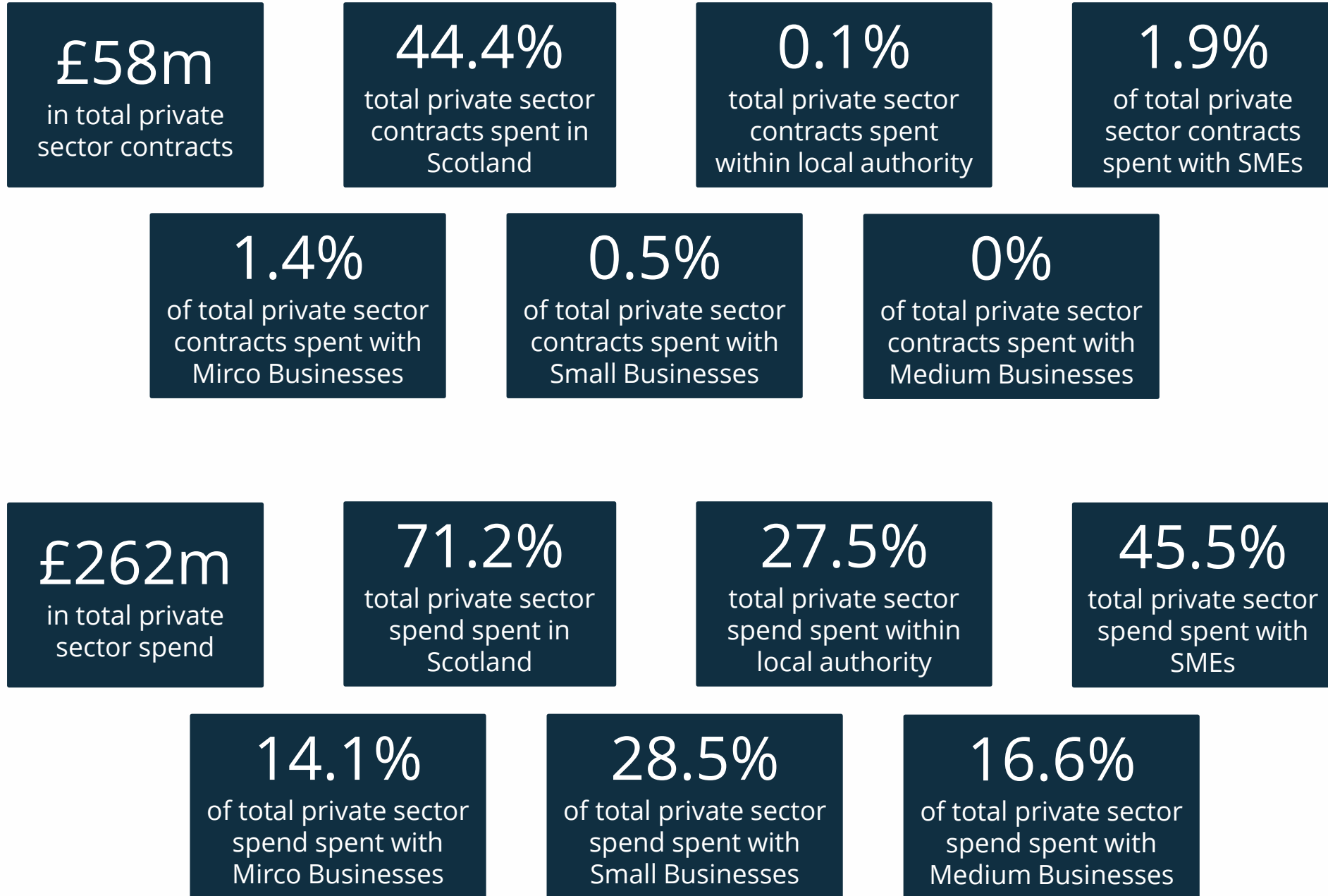
Community Wealth Building

Their annual procurement report mentions an ambition for inclusive economic growth and community wealth building. The appendices highlight updated community wealth building priorities including maximising local spend, exploring measures to support generative businesses to access public sector contracts, utilising Living Wage through procurement, a list of community small project requests, and establishing a CWB procurement partners group to take forward priorities.

The council notes their local spend figures are favourably comparable with other LAs in Scotland but does not break their data down to SME level.

Economic Analysis

Dundee City Council





Case Studies – Dumfries and Galloway Council

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Background

Dumfries and Galloway Council created a [Corporate Procurement Strategy](#) for 2024-26 of aims, objectives and priorities in line with national and local policies. This is overseen by a corporate procurement team structure to manage procurement and deliver on a series of agreed aims from January 2024. Over the next two financial years, the Council will report against key objectives including local economic growth, fair work practices, community wealth building, community benefit delivery and securing procurement savings.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The Council's contract register has been maintained on the Council's website to improve transparency and ease of access to Council contracts, with work in progress to migrate the Community Benefits and Savings trackers to the same platform. Community benefit clauses exist within the Council's procurement processes to bring added value from contracting.

SME

The report notes that a key priority of the Council is to support and grow local enterprises. Their reporting showcases the range of these businesses by size, down to Micro level. There is also a cited community benefit of SME/ Third Sector Business Mentoring.

Lotting

The council does divide some contracts into lots, e.g. Mechanical Biological Treatment and School Meals - Fresh Bakery. This may make SME participation easier.

Capacity Building

The report notes challenges within the council to attract and retain appropriately skilled and experienced procurement professionals. In terms of building capacity in SMEs, the report describes a Community Benefit of mentoring being provided. This package was composed of 10 coaching sessions and six mentoring sessions. There may be an opportunity to replicate this or grow the model.

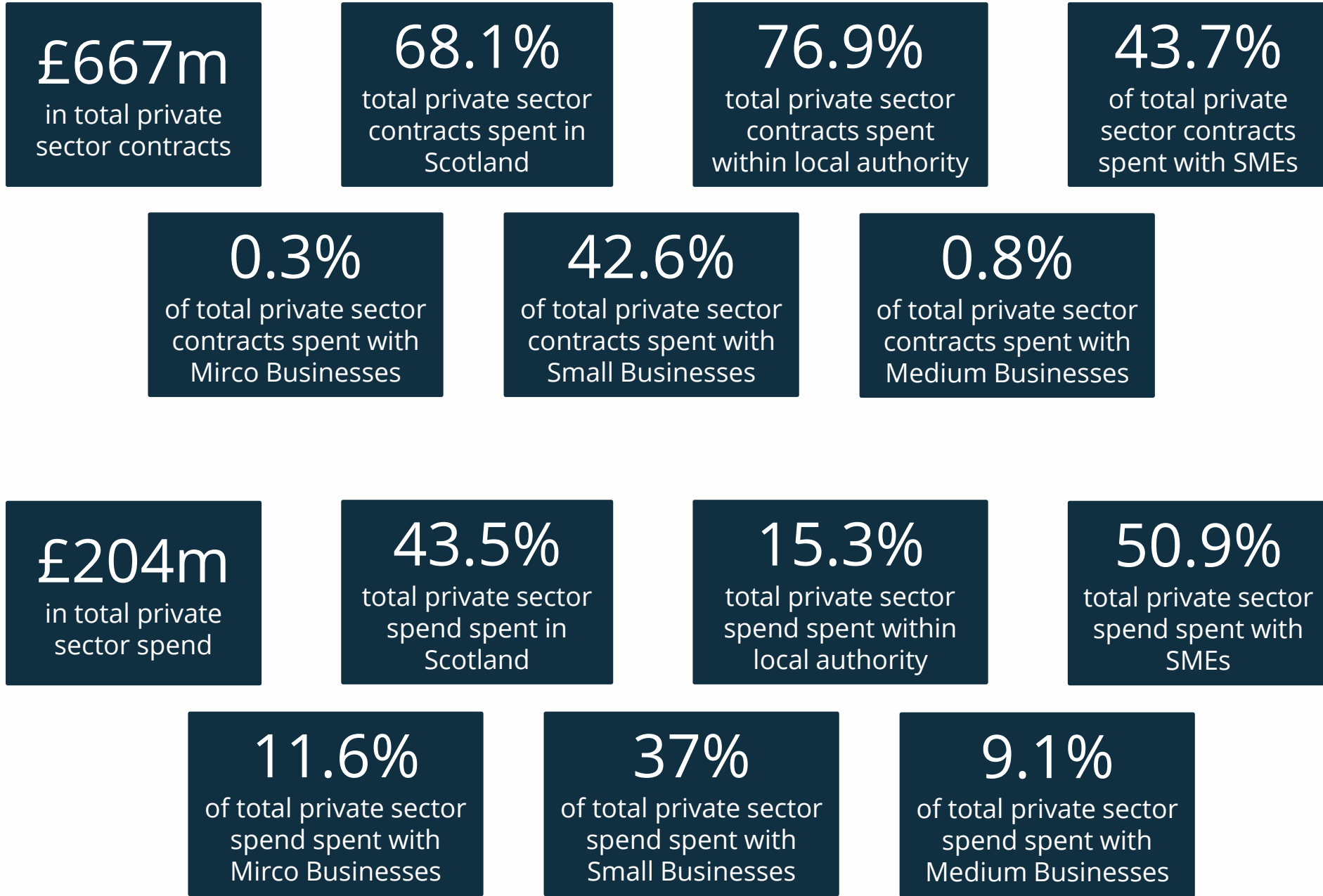
Community Wealth Building

The report mentions the intent to make procurement more effective through developing an approach towards the CWB procurement pillar. The council has reviewed existing good practice and identified areas which could enhance the existing performance with local supply chains. Detail is not provided in terms of what this will look like.

The council already has significant spend in their local area, with SMEs. The geography of the region may be significant here, with a larger pool of enterprises to draw from.

Economic Analysis

Dumfries and Galloway





Case Studies – Fife Council

Procurement Context

Fife Council

Background

In April 2019, Fife began implementing a five-year [Procurement & Commercial Strategy](#). In 2020 Fife Council embarked on becoming a CWB pilot area, with an action plan created which focused on the five pillars of activity, including procurement. A [new procurement strategy](#) has been launched for 2025-30. For this, 'Community Wealth Building incorporating sustainable procurement' is one of the key drivers, which mentions the need to consider how processes can facilitate the involvement of SMEs.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

Fife's procurement function is part of Revenue and Commercial Services and is an 'enabling' support service, within the Council's Finance and Corporate Services Directorate. This is a partly-centralised function with a strategic focus on the generation of financial and non-financial benefits, effective supplier management, robust demand challenge, compliance, fraud prevention, and continuous improvement.

Lotting

Some mention of lotted contracts in appendices, eg Roofing Framework.

Capacity Building

Fife Council's procurement service are working with colleagues in economic development to encourage and grow participation in the SDP. It also worked with Hub East Central Scotland and Tier 1 contractors to develop Build Fife. This supports local construction and associated businesses and selected 14 businesses to take part in a Meet the Buyer event.

SME

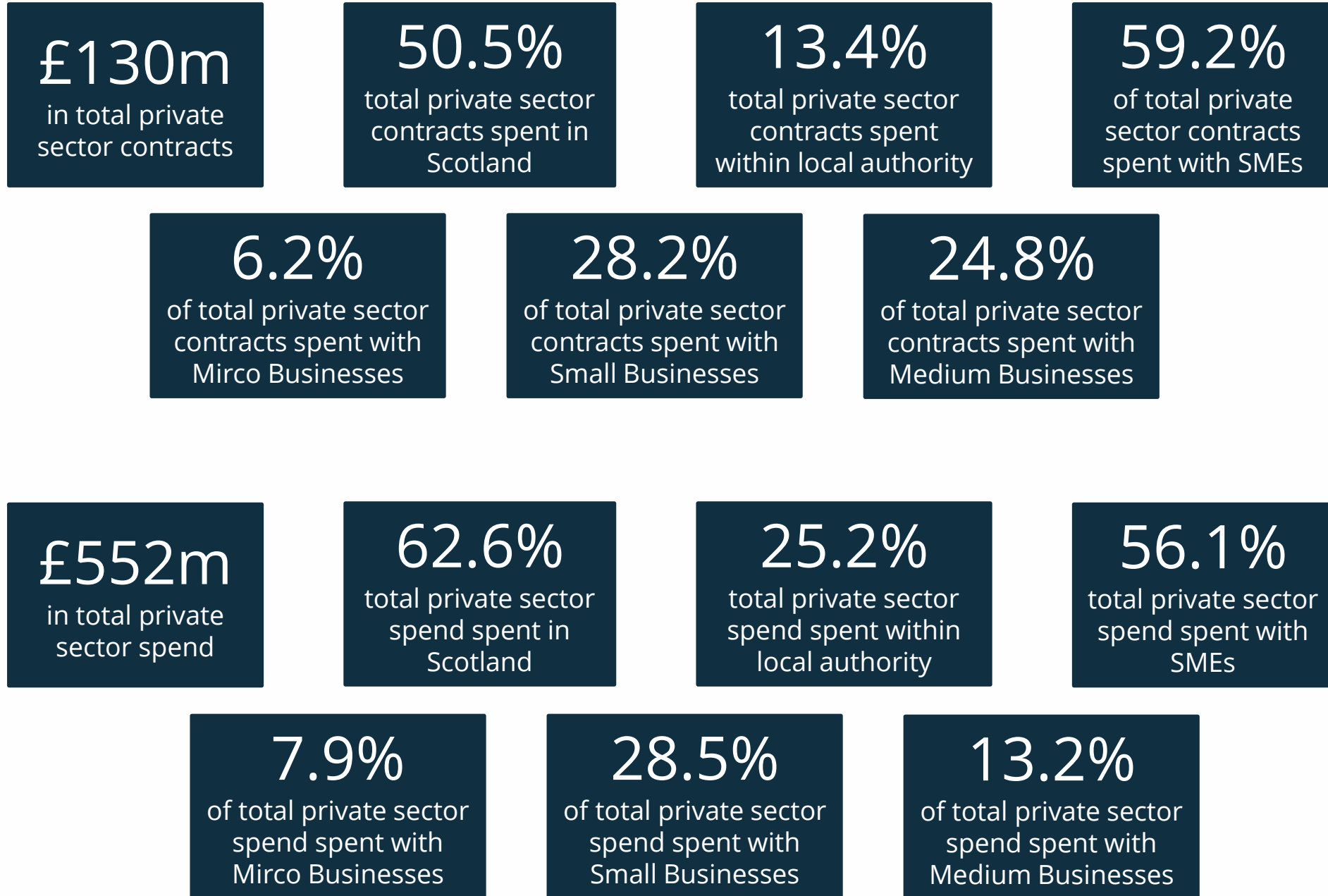
The report mentions a strong desire to support SMEs, particularly local companies and/or those within the supply chain. The report acknowledges there are annual changes to levels of procurement with SMEs, and these are in part based on types of activity being undertaken, but the report highlights these still can have wider positive benefits for Fife businesses through depots/employment in the area or their supply chain. The reporting breaks down spend with SMEs only to Small level and acknowledges that there are challenges over data analysis.

Community Wealth Building

Fife have embedded CWB practices throughout their procurement processes and the council are already procuring significantly from within their area. However, the report highlights that securing all good and services locally will be impossible and aiming for higher in Scotland spend is also important.

Economic Analysis

Fife Council





Case Studies – North Lanarkshire Council

Procurement Context

North Lanarkshire Council

Background

North Lanarkshire Council developed a [Procurement Strategy](#) for 2023/24. Highlighted within this is a desire to design each procurement process where possible to involve SMEs, the Third Sector and Supported Businesses, and emphasises continuing to build relationships with the third sector and using the SDP to provide advice, training and support to local businesses interested in working with the public sector. Whilst the Council acknowledges the wider CWB agenda, they have no specific focus in this regard and are instead focusing on maximizing Community Benefits.

Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024

Commissioning Process

The Council give enhanced consideration for Community Benefits for all Regulated Procurement for Supplies or Services, and for all Works procurements greater than £500k; this is incorporated into the pre-tender procedures

A comprehensive procurement toolkit is in place for Regulated Procurement activity, which aligns with the national standards set by the [Procurement Journey](#) including Sustainable Procurement duty standards such as encouraging to the seven principles of Fair Work First and seeking Community Benefit and/or social value

Capacity Building

The Council jointly host the annual Meet the “Real” Buyer Lanarkshire with South Lanarkshire Council, and have continued to support national events for suppliers which are led and organised by the SDP. The council utilise Community Benefits to encourage supply chain development through events, mentoring and work experience placements.

Lotting

Some contracts were divided into lots by geography e.g. Design, Supply and Build Play Areas 2023, where six contracts were divided between three suppliers.

SME

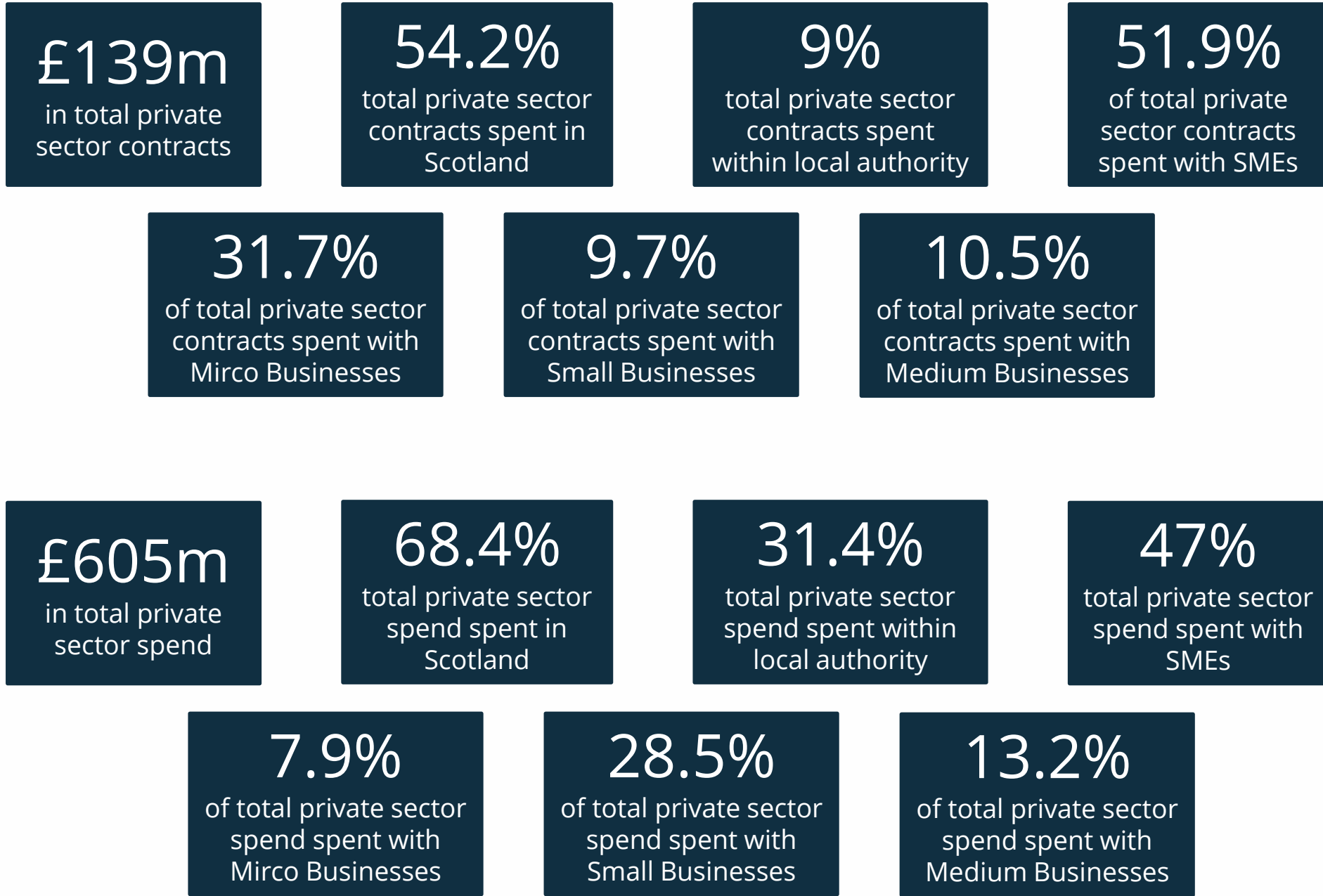
There is reporting on SMEs including as suppliers, total spend, and supply chain development and business mentoring as part of community benefits. However, the reporting does not break down figures to the categories which make up SMEs which hampers comparison with other areas.

Community Wealth Building

The council does not use the language of CWB in its report. Instead focusing on maximising value from Community Benefits. These are utilised to support education and supply chain development.

Economic Analysis

North Lanarkshire Council





Key Themes from Focus Groups

Key Themes From Focus Groups – Public Sector

Session overview and key findings

The public sector focus group took place in late May 2025. There were a total of three attendees from across the seven councils CLES is focusing on in this report. A further follow up interview was held with an additional council employee who was unable to attend the session.

Key findings from the session included:

Capacity

There was much discussion around capacity in the session both from within the public sector and within SMEs.

Local Authority

- The LAs acknowledged that they struggle at times to deliver engagements with SMEs and undertake some of the pipeline awareness work, as well as undertake work to simplify procurement processes and monitor and track data to understand how their procurement practices were impacting the local supply chain. Furthermore, the ability to undertake activity like lotting which could split contracts into more manageable sizes/geographies for SMEs was hampered by capacity constraints to then manage multiple contracts.

SMEs

- Alongside this there was recognition that capacity was lacking within SMEs, and that engagement with them can be challenging, as well as supporting them to scale up and be more ready for procurement opportunities. LAs felt that organisations like the Supplier Development Programme, FSB, Business Gateway, Chamber of Commerce and IoD all had a role to play in supporting SMEs become tender ready and aware of public sector procurement opportunities..

Awareness

Awareness raising was a reoccurring theme throughout the discussion with a particular focus on procurement and frameworks.

Procurement

- The perennial challenge of how to share procurement opportunities was discussed. LAs were utilising the SDP to support SMEs navigate Public Contract Scotland, but still they felt that there was a sense of 'if you know, you know' about procurement opportunities.

Frameworks

- Getting SMEs onto frameworks was identified as a challenge. Alongside this there was awareness raising over how SMEs go about that activity, and whether forming part of a consortium was the best option. Consortia were still viewed with some hesitation from within the public sector and more work would be required from the LAs as well as SMEs and their advocates to build support for consortia.

Community Wealth Building

- All of the local authorities spoken with mentioned the influence of community wealth building on their procurement activity. For one, having the Bill coming through parliament was an enabling factor to bring more staff onboard with progressive procurement activity. For others there was nervousness over what the detail of the Bill would look like and how/if it would set out mandatory targets. Working with LAs to ensure they are not unfairly penalised due to size, business base, or CWB activity to date was seen as essential. There was an opportunity identified to look at procurement thresholds as part of CWB legislation to enable easier procurement from SMEs.

Key Themes From Focus Groups – FSB Members

Session overview and key findings

The FSB member focus group took place in early June 2025. There were six attendees from across the FSB membership representing procurement experiences from within SMEs including construction and early learning provision as well as organisations supporting SMEs access procurement.

Key findings from the session included:

Capacity

Mirroring the previous focus group with the public sector, there was much discussion over capacity. This was expressed both from within SMEs themselves, but also within the public sector.

SMEs

- Whilst there was appetite to engage with frameworks and larger procurement opportunities, the realities of the processes involved alongside 'doing the day job' were acknowledged.
- Procurement language and processes were felt to be unduly burdensome on SMEs and some degree of flexibility or proportionality would be welcomed to acknowledge the challenges they face and the contribution to local places they make.

Public Sector

- It was noted by SMEs that the public sector's ability to provide support to them or engage in relation to procurement had generally diminished over time. Some had positive stories to tell of their relationship with LAs, however, overall, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration.

Awareness

Awareness raising was a reoccurring theme throughout the discussion with a particular focus on procurement opportunities.

Procurement

- Echoing the discussion with LAs, the FSB members commented that they felt unable to access information to procurement opportunities at times. Whilst they were engaging with Meet the Buyer events, many felt these were not getting to the 'right' people who made procurement decisions.

Support services

- All the participants had heard of, or made use of various support services such as SDP, Business Gateway, Scottish Procurement Alliance and rated them generally highly.

Community Wealth Building

- Whilst some in the discussion had heard of CWB and hoped its growth would enable them to access more procurement opportunities, this had not translated into visible concrete activity.

Practice vs Reality

There was discussion over the language used in procurement legislation, and the aspiration contained within to grow SMEs.

Monitoring

- Linking closely to capacity, it was felt that the public sector was not successfully tracking and monitoring the delivery of Community Benefits (CBs). There was aspiration from legislation to have these deliver broader social benefits, but it was highlighted that larger companies were often more skilled in 'telling the story' of what they would deliver. The public sector was unable to then follow up and ensure this was happening. It was felt that SMEs inherently generated more CBs through their involvement in local communities and wider societal contributions.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Conclusions

The work has highlighted both the variety of approaches adopted and some of the existing challenges when trying to analyse procurement spend in Scotland with Scottish Local Authorities.

- The reporting has identified the **variance of availability** of data relating to local authority procurement practices. Despite significant progress being made in terms of annual procurement reporting, still the **lack of consistency** over available data is a challenge to thorough analysis.
- If the Scottish Government is committed to community wealth building, then ensuring accurate reporting is essential. Working with LAs to ensure data is recorded **consistently and accurately** is important, as is **collaboration with industry bodies** to ensure it is possible to break down analysis to micro level. This will enable a far more sophisticated picture of the levels of local and SME procurement spend.

- **Community wealth building activity has led to improvements in procurement from SMEs** and local enterprises as demonstrated through annual procurement reports. However, from the sample of LAs investigated, there was no demonstrable correlation between CWB pilots and SME procurement activity from the quantitative analysis over 2023-2024. Instead, the qualitative reviews of annual procurement reports and focus group conversations highlighted the range of activities which are underway in LAs which are taking a CWB approach and give indication of SME spend increasing over time.
- Local authorities operate in unique circumstances and have contextual factors such as **geography, size and regional density which must be acknowledged**. Any benchmarking alongside the quantitative reporting of data must take these factors into consideration.
- Alongside this there is a need to acknowledge that **having a registered address in a locality does not necessarily mean the business operations are based there**, or the benefits will flow there. This is one of the challenges with local spend reporting.
- **Capacity is constrained** from within the public sector and SMEs and if the ambition is to grow the SME landscape through public sector procurement, ensuring adequate resourcing of the public sector, and support mechanisms to encourage SMEs to tender is essential.
- The Scottish Government's progressive procurement ambitions are admirable, and with the introduction of the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill there is a chance to **be bold and visionary in procurement practices**. Now is the time to revisit the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 and ensure it is fit for purpose and aligns with broader legislation and policy.
- Procurement is only one part of CWB, ensuring it is used strategically as part of the other pillars and broader ambitions for place is essential.

Recommendations

Recommendations

The work undertaken through this project has highlighted that there are significant opportunities to refine procurement processes and strengthen the commitment to procure from SMEs across Scotland. Local Authorities showcased different approaches, each responding to their unique geography and business landscape. This work has highlighted a great desire from all spoken to, to find spaces for collaboration and consensus and to grow local business and employment opportunities.

As the Scottish Government continues its focus on Community Wealth Building, and as the Bill makes its way through parliament, now is the time to ensure Scotland's procurement legislation is supportive of SMEs. The research process highlighted there are still inconsistencies of collection, reporting and analysis of data and therefore opportunities to align this around Community Wealth Building aspirations.

We set out the recommendations for the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Federation of Small Businesses across the following slides.

Scottish Government Recommendations

- **Legislative Alignment**
 - **CWB Legislation**

The introduction of the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill in March 2025 provides a significant opportunity to foster progressive procurement practices and grow local enterprise ecosystems. SMEs play a crucial role in this, making up the backbone of the Scottish economy.

As it currently stands there are opportunities to amend the CWB legislation or the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 to reduce barriers to SME procurement. These could include:

- Increasing the £50,000 cap on Quick Quotes for supplier and services.
- Reducing administrative requirements on SMEs to make this proportional to the value of the contract.
- Build on the SME and Third Sector Procurement Action Plan to ensure legislation supports the aspiration.
- **Sectoral support**
 - **Capacity raising**

It was highlighted throughout this research that support bodies such as the Supplier Development Programme, Business Gateway and Local Authorities themselves have been helpful for SMEs looking to engage in greater procurement opportunities.

The ambition to grow progressive procurement and support SMEs with procurement and tenders will require time and resources to deliver. The Scottish Government needs to match ambition with a plan for delivery which includes appropriate funding of these bodies to support SMEs take on procurement opportunities.

Scottish Government Recommendations Cont.

- **Local Authority Procurement Reports**

- **Coverage**

The Scottish Government should ensure all local authorities publish annual procurement reports.

- **Detail**

Annual procurement reports are a great asset, and there is an opportunity to align, strengthen and improve them to better understand and compare procurement practices.

Whilst the Scottish Government has already laid out detail of the structure of the annual procurement reports, greater uniformity is required to ensure that comparisons and analysis can be conducted between these documents. Currently, the different authorities are including different data and analytics within their reports. For instance, some procurement reports, report on total spend whilst others only report on the contract procurement that they are required to report on, this makes it challenging to compare data and analytics as the base data being analysed differs. Mirroring the reporting required from within the Procurement Act 2023 would support cross UK comparisons to be made.

All reports need to include the annual procurement template to ensure that some of the data is standardised and comparable and ensuring reporting across different categories of SMEs would be beneficial in analysis and comparison.

Improvement Service data and benchmarking is a useful tool to track local authority expenditure with SMEs however, the inconsistency over reporting identified through this research begs questions over the accuracy of the data they utilise.

- **Procurement data**

- **Access and analysis**

There is an opportunity to work with the Scottish Procurement Information Hub to ensure collated data can be widely analysed and reporting takes place down to micro level to understand procurement practices across the full range of SMEs. It would be beneficial to provide a dataset which would sit along the procurement reports, collating all the required data in one place, to enable analysis and evaluation. This could be similar to the Scottish Local Government Finance Statistics, solely looking at contract spend. Furthermore, including the categorisation of contract spend into sectors or themes would be helpful, as currently it is difficult to categorise contract spend into digestible sectors, which are easy to navigate and understand.

Local Authority Recommendations

- **Procurement reporting**
 - **Data reporting**

As highlighted throughout this report, the access to, and quality of, data available through the annual procurement reports from local authorities was inconsistent.

Local Authorities should work with the Scottish Government to identify mechanisms to ensure consistent reporting of contract and spend data and enable better comparison between areas. Reporting down to micro level for SME would be particularly beneficial.

- **Adopt a holistic Community Wealth Building approach**

As the Scottish Government takes forward Community Wealth Building legislation, there is a need to ensure the public sector enshrines community wealth building practices throughout all strategies and approaches, not merely confining it to economic development or procurement. The Scottish Government's prioritisation of community wealth building is helping places to become more strategic when it comes how they spend their money and to become more intentional in supporting and shaping their economies and places through all the levers of activity. However, there is now an opportunity to deepen this work and begin to scale up the impact across Scotland through greater consistency of practice

- **Procurement strategies**

Weaving in initiatives which support local enterprises and SMEs through procurement strategies is the first step on this journey. Building on from this, it is essential to see the role wider procurement can play in a local economy particularly targeting key sectors to maximise local impact.

- **Economic development**

Some of the Local Authorities engaged with had worked hard to build connections between economic development and procurement teams and this had led to positive results with local procurement. This should be adopted more widely.

Federation of Small Businesses Recommendations

- **Sector support**
 - **Procurement readiness**

As a representative body for SMEs with strong links across the Scottish policy landscape, there may be opportunities for the FSB (alongside other organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Supplier Development Programme, IoD etc) to support their members more systematically to undertake public sector tenders and grow the sectors awareness of, and participation in procurement.

This could entail working with the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to co-design procurement documentation and processes as well as lobbying for greater opportunities for SMEs to participate in procurement.

There may also be opportunities to support SMEs, and ensure the public sector feel confident in using less utilised forms of procurement such as consortiums.

- **Further analysis**
 - **Time series**

If the FSB is keen to understand to a greater extent the changing landscape of procurement from SMEs across Scotland since the introduction of CWB legislation, then conducting greater analysis over a longer-time period would be beneficial. This would enable a greater understanding of the overall pattern of spend across the local authorities. This would mitigate the data variances seen over large one-off contracts that Local Authorities may be procuring.



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