SCOTTISH FUTURES TRUST

Outcomes 2024/25

PRIMARY OUTCOME

1

A clear picture of Scotland's future infrastructure needs

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

NET ZERO

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Unlocking the future of Blindwells – Scotland's first new town in nearly 60 years

Overview

Just twelve miles east of Edinburgh lies Blindwells, a site with deep historical roots and even deeper economic potential. Once an open cast coal mine within an area of wider mine workings, this 540-hectare previously developed site (equivalent to approx. 750 international football pitches) in East Lothian, is now at the heart of a bold vision: to create Scotland's first new town since Irvine in 1966.

With plans for up to **10,000 homes** and a projected population of **26,000**, Blindwells represents not just a housing solution, but a transformational opportunity to drive **regional, national, and UK-level economic growth**.

The opportunity

Identified as a strategic housing site since the 1990s, Phase 1 of Blindwells is already underway, with the first phases of a **1,600 home development completed**. But the real potential lies next door, a significantly larger area that could support tens of thousands more residents. Unlocking this, however, has been no simple feat.

The challenge

Despite its potential, the site faces a complex web of **planning, legal, and funding constraints**. A fragmented delivery landscape and the sheer scale of infrastructure needed presents a significant barrier to progress. Realising this vision will require more than just ambition, it needs strategic coordination, public sector support, and investor confidence. The Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) provided advice and support to the Council, facilitating internal workshops and partner meetings to consider the project's scope, scale and deliverability.

PRIMARY
OUTCOME

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A clear picture of Scotland's future infrastructure needs

Unlocking the future of Blindwells – Scotland's first new town in nearly 60 years

The solution

A collaborative, infrastructure-first approach

Working with **East Lothian Council** and the two master developers, SFT's Place, Housing and Economic Investment team together with its Real Estate team spearheaded a coordinated strategy built on three pillars:

1. **Setting shared objectives**: Establishing a unified vision and measurable goals for all stakeholders
2. **Building consensus**: Developing a strong and agreed proposition, securing leadership buy-in across public and private sectors
3. **Strategic business planning**: Co-creating a robust **Strategic Outline Business Case** (SOBC) that lays the foundations for delivery and investment

By adopting an **infrastructure-first model**, the team crafted a proposal that not only meets housing needs but also supports long-term economic and social resilience.

The impact

With an estimated **£2.5 billion in private sector investment** to be unlocked, the Blindwells project has the potential to become a landmark in sustainable urban development, and a model for future growth.

The SOBC, backed by strong multi-stakeholder commitment, sets the stage for:

- Delivering up to **10,000 new homes**
- Creating a community of **26,000 people**
- Meeting a **significant share of regional housing demand**
- Supporting a **future-ready workforce**
- Revitalising a former coal mine into **a thriving, low-carbon new town**

Looking ahead

Over the next **30 years**, Blindwells has the potential to evolve from a legacy of previously developed land into a dynamic, inclusive, and economically vital new town. Thanks to the collaborative groundwork laid by SFT, the PHEI and Real Estate teams, East Lothian Council, and the private sector, the future of Blindwells is a plan in motion.

Blindwells isn't just a development, it's a statement of what's possible when ambition meets alignment.