

VOICES OF AYRSHIRE BUSINESSES



Insights from the Quarterly Economic Survey (Q1 2026)

The following quotes are taken directly from open responses submitted by Ayrshire businesses to the Quarterly Economic Survey.

They reflect real experiences across sectors including manufacturing, construction, professional services, hospitality, retail, public and third sector.

COST PRESSURES & COMPETITIVENESS

- **“The increase in wages, National Insurance, tax and utilities is strangling the business.”**
- **“Pressure from tax and rising wage costs makes it increasingly difficult to remain competitive.”**
- **“Labour costs, raw materials and energy costs are all rising at once – it’s the cumulative impact that’s hardest to manage.”**

PRICING, MARGINS & PROFITABILITY

- **“The issue isn’t just rising costs – it’s the ability to pass these on without losing customers.”**
- **“We expect turnover to hold, but profitability is under sustained pressure.”**
- **“Growth alone no longer equals financial health.”**

WORKFORCE, SKILLS & RECRUITMENT

- **“Finding skilled staff locally is difficult – even when we’re willing to train.”**
- **“Recruitment isn’t just a skills issue – transport and access to training are real barriers.”**
- **“We want to invest in apprenticeships, but the current system doesn’t align with how our business operates.”**

TRAINING & SKILLS PIPELINES

- **“The nearest college offering the apprenticeship we need is two councils away – that’s why we can’t recruit locally.”**
- **“We want to invest more in training, but cashflow pressure makes that increasingly difficult.”**

INVESTMENT, CONFIDENCE & POLICY IMPACT

- **“Investment has been delayed because there is too much uncertainty around future costs and policy.”**
- **“Business rates and taxation increases are directly holding back planned capital investment.”**
- **“Frequent announcements with limited impact – that’s how government policy feels in practice.”**

PLACE, REPRESENTATION & REGIONAL VISIBILITY

- **“There is no clear sense that Ayrshire receives the same level of attention as other regions.”**
- **“Island and rural businesses feel particularly overlooked.”**

RESILIENCE & OPPORTUNITY

- **“Despite everything, we remain confident if the right conditions are put in place.”**
- **“Collaboration with other Ayrshire businesses has opened new opportunities.”**
- **“Partnership working locally has been one of the few clear positives.”**

About the Quarterly Economic Survey

The Quarterly Economic Survey is the UK's longest-running independent business sentiment survey.

Ayrshire's results now feed directly into Scottish and UK-wide economic intelligence, ensuring local business experience informs national decision-making.

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Q1 2026 REPORT**

