



**Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting
Thursday 4th June 2020 – 9.00 am – 11.00 am – virtual online meeting**

Attendees :

Cllr Jennifer Laing	Co-Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr John Alexander	Leader, Dundee City Council
David Martin	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Cllr Adam McVey	Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Andrew Kerr	Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Susan Aitken	Leader, Glasgow City Council (items 1-2)
Cllr Margaret Davidson	Leader, Highland Council
Donna Manson	Chief Executive, Highland Council
Cllr Murray Lyle	Leader, Perth and Kinross Council
Karen Reid	Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross Council
Iain McCreaddie	Interim Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance

Also in attendance :

Fiona Hyslop MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (item 4)
Richard Sweetnam	Aberdeen City Council
Sharon Thomson	Glasgow City Council
Steven MacDonald	Stirling Council
Stephen White	Scottish Government
Erin McCue	Scottish Government
Stuart Greig	Transport Scotland
Fiona Landy	Scottish Cities Alliance/Transport Scotland
Lillian McDowall	Scottish Cities Alliance
Amy Groden	Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel McDermid	Scottish Cities Alliance

Apologies :

Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Cllr Scott Farmer	Leader, Stirling Council
Carol Beattie	Chief Executive, Stirling Council
Michael Matheson MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity
Jon Pickstone	Deputy Director, Business Engagement and Regional Economic Development, Scottish Government

Note of meeting

1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies

The Chair welcomed the group to the Alliance's first virtual meeting and introductions were made and apologies tabled as noted above. The Chair advised that the Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop would be joining the meeting later to lead a discussion on Agenda Item 4.

2. Maximising Opportunities for Scotland from COP-26

Cllr Aitken led a discussion on how the Alliance partners might collectively maximise opportunities from COP-26 which she confirmed has now been rescheduled to take place in Glasgow in November 2021. It was noted that the delay in hosting the conference presented an opportunity for the cities to have a strong proposition for both Scottish and UK Government's to prioritise investment in cities to address the climate change crisis. Work led by the Alliance's CEO Group to develop a co-designed action plan with cities, government and agencies to address the transition to net zero carbon challenge in the Scottish Cities Outlook will assist all partners to demonstrate Scotland's commitment to this agenda.

Other points raised in discussion included the opportunity to capitalise on the behavioural change across citizens and business brought about by COVID-19 restrictions and the opportunity for cities to use this as the catalyst for further engagement on a just transition to net zero carbon. Cllr Aitken noted that COP-26 provided a unique opportunity for cities to engage with a number of key networks including The Bloomberg Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation and the Marrakesh Partnership, and that there was a role for the cities to lead on different engagement opportunities which build upon their own partnership connections such as the Energy Cities Partnership of which Aberdeen currently holds the presidency for.

The group agreed that it would be useful to keep preparations for COP-26 as a standing item on the agenda for the Alliance Leadership Group and in the first instance the Alliance Core Team should work with Glasgow to develop a paper setting out how the Leaders may work together on a co-ordinated programme of activity for circulation before the next Leadership Group meeting in September.

3. Note of Previous Meeting (13th November 2019)

The note of the previous meeting was approved and updates noted on previous items as follows:-

National Infrastructure Commission for Scotland

The Scottish Government advised that the Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson welcomed the key findings report from the Commission in January noting its focus on delivering an inclusive net zero carbon economy. The Commission plans to report again in mid-2020 and the Government's 2020 Infrastructure Investment Plan will be informed by the Commission's recommendations.

EU Successor Funding

The chair advised that a Scottish cities response was submitted to the Scottish Government's consultation on EU Successor funding in February. Key themes emerging from the responses received by the Scottish Government include the desire to see a flexible, locally developed and led programme of support that has simplified administration, a fit with the National Performance Framework, a focus on social inclusion, wellbeing and climate change, and uses measures of success that are broader than just GVA. It was noted that the next update on the UK Government's plans regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

5G Strategy

The Scottish Government advised that it was their expectation that 5G rollout in Scotland would be commercially led, supported by public sector actions detailed in the 5G Strategy which aim to break down barriers to deployment. For example, the government will develop rental guidance to help facilitate the more effective use of public sector assets for telecoms deployment.

The Alliance's Interim Programme Director also advised that the Alliance had facilitated discussions between cities and rates assessors following concerns raised at the last Leadership Group meeting regarding the rates charged as a result of deploying 5G small technology on publicly owned infrastructure such as lampposts. These discussions subsequently led to a positive outcome relating to Glasgow's small cell project. Going forward, the assessors confirmed that there is an opportunity to set the policy for Scotland in line with Scottish objectives as part of work due to commence shortly to review the rateable value of the technology due in 2022 and the Alliance will continue to support this work.

4. Economic Restart and Recovery, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop to the meeting and congratulated her on her new and expanded role before inviting her to update the cities on work underway by the government on economic restart and recovery from COVID-19.

The Cabinet Secretary began by thanking the City Leaders and CEO's for their resolve in supporting the enormous body of work across local government to make the necessary changes to service provision in response to COVID-19 and urged everyone to look after themselves, as maintaining this solidarity of approach going forward will be key to addressing the scale of the economic impact being felt across the country. An overview of the four phases of the Scottish Government's economic response was provided (response: response, reset, restart and recover) followed by an outline of the remit of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery.

Reflecting on points raised in the discussion under Agenda item 2, she advised that she saw a green economic recovery as central to the government's thinking referencing opportunities in the North East to transition jobs from the energy sector, considering how we turn the community response to COVID-19 into an environmental response to climate change for example by taking a community jobs Scotland approach to keep people active and engaged in society and the labour market at this time.

In discussion, the city Leaders referenced the challenges they faced resourcing key local plans and schemes for recovery which focused on mitigating the impact of jobs and poverty in the short, medium and longer term. It was acknowledged that working with the Scottish Government to support the delivery of these plans across the Scottish cities would be key to delivering on the national approach, ensuring that cities played to their strengths. Key areas raised in discussion by the city Leaders included particular issues faced by the tourism sector; support for city airports and maintaining access routes for businesses and tourists; providing routes and support for young graduates to remain active in the economy; using investment in infrastructure to stimulate private investment; investment incentives for offshore renewables, energy transition and the green economy and the potential to revisit investment priorities across the city and growth deals to ensure they remain targeted and relevant in light of restart and recovery plans across the city regions.

The Cabinet Secretary welcomed the helpful discussion with the City Leaders, noting a needs-based assessment for funding is key and asked for their continued support in shaping the targeted response and distribution of resources as part of the wider restart and recovery process to build confidence in the medium to longer term. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Secretary for her overview, extending the offer to the government to utilise the Alliance to engage with the cities as the economic drivers of the Scottish economy as it looks to develop and shape its thinking including being bold, ambitious and strategic about our collective approach to job retention and creation.

5. Decarbonising Transport – an integrated approach

The chair welcomed Stuart Greig, Director of the Low Carbon Economy Directorate in Transport Scotland, who delivered a presentation to the group on the initiatives they have been working on to assist cities to achieve net zero emission city centres by 2030, set out in the Programme for Government.

The Leaders welcomed the presentation, acknowledging that it really helped illustrate the economic, environmental and social benefits cities could coalesce around working with government and national agencies. In discussion, an immediate barrier to making swift progress across cities in this area related to regulation and bureaucracy around green infrastructure projects such as the expansion of the power capacity needed to install charging points for electric vehicles. Transport Scotland acknowledged the extension of power capacity issue and referenced discussions underway to address this with a power company and the regulator which they would keep the cities updated on.

The Chair thanked Stuart for his presentation and advised that this issue will be kept on the agenda for the Alliance as part of the discussions connected to maximising opportunities from COP-26 as well as work underway to develop a co-designed action plan with government and agencies to address the transition to net zero carbon challenge in the Scottish Cities Outlook report.

6. Annual Report – 2019-2020

The interim Programme Director spoke to the Annual Report tabled noting that the style of the report has changed this year to take on board feedback received from Leaders and CEOs who were keen for the document to be a more succinct piece of collateral which they could use to demonstrate both what the Alliance has delivered over the last year and the added value of working collaboratively on the 3 workstreams in the Alliance's Operational Programme.

The group approved the report for publication on the Alliance website, subject to an amend to the Hydrogen Case Study proposed by Aberdeen. The group also approved the budget update for publication on the website.

7. AOB

- Following the retiral of Aileen Edwards as the Alliance's Programme Director in April, the group noted her contribution to the Alliance and wished her all the very best in her retirement.
- The Alliance's Investor Relations and Communication Manger advised that following the cancellation of MIPIM 2020 due to COVID-19, the Alliance is developing an online investor programme, with 3 events already scheduled to take place later this year. The Chair noted from his own involvement in the Alliance's investment programme since COVID-19 that investors are still interested in Scotland at this time and encouraged all Leaders to take up opportunities to work with the Alliance on their digital investment programme of events. It was also noted that a financial modelling tool the Alliance developed with Grant Thornton will shortly be available to cities to help test the robustness of their propositions before taking them to market.
- The Interim Programme Director advised that following the cancellation of the meeting with Ministers for Cllr Lyle to discuss the business case for the health and social care data Local Governance Review pilot project due to COVID-19, he had agreed with Scottish Government and CoSLA to revisit setting up this meeting for late summer 2020. Following discussions with Highland Council regarding the pilot project they were leading on, the intention is to revisit progressing this business case with the Alliance's Delivery Group after the summer where they would look to reflect on the feedback received from the City Leaders' discussion in February.

8. Dates of Future Meetings:

- **Leadership Group meeting** – Wed 9th September 2020 – Dundee
The Chair noted that the intention is for this meeting to have a focus on attracting investment in the cities involving the Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop. The Cabinet Secretary Kate Forbes has also indicated an interest in attending this meeting which the Alliance's Core Team will look to coordinate with the Cities Team in Scottish Government.
- **Leadership Group meeting** – 18th November 2020 – Glasgow

The chair thanked everyone for their attendance

The meeting finished at 11.06 am.

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