



**Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting
Wednesday 9th September June 2020 – 10.30 – 12.30 pm – virtual online meeting**

Attendance :

Cllr Jennifer Laing	Co-Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr John Alexander	Leader, Dundee City Council (Chair)
David Martin	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Cllr Adam McVey	Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Susan Aitken	Leader, Glasgow City Council
Cllr Margaret Davidson	Leader, Highland Council
Donna Manson	Chief Executive, Highland Council
Cllr Murray Lyle	Leader, Perth and Kinross Council
Cllr Scott Farmer	Leader, Stirling Council
Carol Beattie	Chief Executive, Stirling Council
Fiona Hyslop MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (item 5)

Also in attendance :

Stephen White	Scottish Government
Richard Sweetnam	Aberdeen City Council
Ummar Hanif	Real Estate Specialist, Department for International Trade (items 6 & 7)
Mark Wells	Director, Real Estate Long Income, Aviva (item 6 & 7)
Anthony Danaher	Executive Chairman ING Media & Principal Advisor Department for International Trade (item 6 & 7)
Gemma Shah	ING Media (item 6 & 7)
Stuart MacLure	ING Media (item 6 & 7)
Iain McCreaddie	Interim Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance
Lillian McDowall	Scottish Cities Alliance
Amy Groden	Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel Brennan	Scottish Cities Alliance

Apologies received from:

Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Andrew Kerr	Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council
Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Karen Reid	Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross Council
Michael Matheson MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity
Jon Pickstone	Scottish Government

1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies

The chair welcomed the group and noted apologies as detailed above, advising that Fiona Hyslop will be joining the meeting for agenda item 5.

2. Note of Previous Meeting – 4th June 2020

The note of the previous meeting was approved and an update was given as follows :

Item 2 - Maximising Opportunities for Scotland from COP-26 – As per discussion at the City Leaders meeting on 13th August, the Alliance Core Team will work with Glasgow to develop an outline programme of activity in the year leading up to COP26. This will be discussed with the Delivery Group to give all partners an opportunity to contribute to the programme before a final version is tabled for discussion and approval at the Leadership Group meeting on 18th November 2020.

3. Scottish Cities Outlook – Interim Update

The interim Programme Director gave an update on work undertaken to date to co-design an action plan with cities, government and national agencies responding to the transition to net zero carbon challenge in the Scottish Cities Outlook report noting in particular the welcome commitment from Scottish Government to support the cities via the Alliance with this work as part of its Implementation Plan for Economic Recovery.

An opportunity was provided for the group to reflect on the discussion at the City Leaders meeting on 13th August where the Leaders were given the opportunity to learn from Edinburgh, London, Stockholm and Oslo about how those cities' leaders are working to transition their cities to net zero and specifically shape the behavioural change required from citizens and businesses as part of that process. An overview was also given of plans underway to develop a transition to net zero knowledge exchange network between the Alliance partners to enable peer to peer learning from good practice case studies and access learning from other UK and global cities.

The group confirmed they found the discussion around behaviour exchange informative, and encouraged more engagement of this nature as part of planned work on peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. The Leaders confirmed that it would be helpful if the peer-to-peer knowledge exchange were targeted at both elected officials and officers across the partners, with a particular focus on sharing best practice case studies of how each of the cities are working to advance activity on the net zero carbon agenda. Cllr McVey noted a recent prompt by the Alliance for Edinburgh to consider opportunities connected to the use of hydrogen in waste vehicles as a example of where the Alliance is well placed to ensure that all cities remain ahead of the curve on this agenda. Cllr Farmer referenced the recent Alliance annual report as a useful tool in terms of providing an overview of existing activity in cities and that he welcomed an approach by the Alliance over the summer to generate a blog which profiles all the existing activity taking place in Stirling on transition to net zero. The interim Programme Director welcomed the feedback and noted that the Alliance has populated a Transition to Net Zero briefing pack detailing existing activity across the cities, government and agencies and will use this in the first instance as the basis for producing knowledge exchange materials for the partners.

The Chair thanked the interim Programme Director for the update and invited the Leaders to contact the Alliance Core Team if they had any particular suggestions for activity they wished considered as part of the co-designed Transition to Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

4. Directors Report

The interim Programme Director spoke to the update tabled on the Operational Programme 2018-2022 where the following points were noted:-

- The Alliance is looking to hold 3 online investment promotion events over the next 6 months providing all Leaders with an opportunity to be involved as part of the panel.
- The Alliance website is in the process of being updated providing a rejuvenated platform to promote opportunities in Scotland's smart and sustainable cities via the Alliance Pitch Book.
- The Alliance's 8th City ERDF Programme is now fully committed with 46 projects across Phase 1 and 2 involving all 7 cities. A focus for the next period will be the production of case studies as many of the Phase 1 projects are nearing completion.
- The Alliance's data cluster has secured resource to support cities to engage with their citizens via a series of workshops over the next 6 months to ensure the data they are publishing meets the needs of citizens. The learning gained from this exercise will help inform and prioritise future data publication activity by the cities.

- The Alliance's Hydrogen Project Manager has taken up a position within the recently launched Hydrogen Accelerator. Although no longer part of the Alliance team, she will continue to work closely with the Alliance to support the cities to build Scotland's Hydrogen Economy.

It was further noted that Talent Scotland are organising a series of webinars and tutorials for companies who may be considering hiring overseas talent now or in the future and need assistance navigating the new points based immigration system. Information updating Leaders on the opportunity to front one of these webinars for SME's in their region will be circulated shortly.

The interim Programme Director spoke to the CIF budget tabled to 30th June 2020 and the group approved the budget for publication on the Alliance website.

5. Economic Restart and Recovery

The Chair welcomed Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture who gave an update on work undertaken by the government since the last Leadership Group meeting on 4th June on the economic impact of COVID-19 and the government's plans for job retention and creation going forward, linked to its Implementation Plan for Economic Recovery and the Programme for Government. Specific initiatives mentioned by the Cabinet Secretary to help create new, fairer and greener jobs included the newly launched £1.6 billion green investment portfolio; a youth guarantee to provide every young person aged between 16-24 with access to a job, education, training or development programme; creation of a £100 million green jobs fund which will support job creation across businesses and SMEs; £1.6 billion to transform buildings to ensure that emissions from heating are eliminated by the 2040s; and working with local government to update the Scottish digital action plan to accelerate the transformation of key digital public services. The Cabinet Secretary went on to talk about the government's continued recognition of the importance of a place based approach to economic development and their desire to work with cities and their regional partners to adapt the city regional and growth deal programme in response to Covid-19.

Key areas raised in discussion by the city Leaders included: the role affordable housing has to play in terms of providing jobs as well as tackling climate change, inequalities and homelessness; the need for longer term support beyond the Scottish Government specific funding to support those cultural venues including nightclubs which will not be able to open anytime soon due to restrictions; the importance of pressing ahead with the Circular Economy Bill's progression through parliament given its central role to supporting plans around transition to net zero; and the desire where possible for flexibility around how city deal money is utilised other than already committed, given changes to the economic landscape. The Cabinet Secretary responded to all points raised and challenged the cities to consider how they want to reinvent the situation they find themselves in as a result of the pandemic and try where possible to capitalise on the cities' ability to enable economic activity to happen in a controlled environment.

The chair thanked the Cabinet Secretary for her overview of work undertaken by the government since she last spoke with the group and noted opportunities for the Government to engage with the cities collectively via the Alliance as a vehicle to deliver specific activity such as increasing the value of the Green Investment Portfolio to £3 billion over the next 2 years, as well as wider work building on the Alliance's Transition to Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

6. Investment Discussion - Mark Wells, Director, Real Estate Long Income, Aviva

The Chair welcomed Mark Wells to the meeting noting that he had met Mark's colleagues at Aviva as part of the Alliance's MIPIM UK programme in October last year, before meeting Mark in person in London after he attended a DiT Roundtable event the Alliance invited him to at no. 10 Downing Street.

Mark spoke to the Leaders about Aviva's approach to investment and the types of investments they were keen to make in Scotland with reference to investments Aviva has previously made in the Scottish cities. Mark also touched upon the impact Covid-19 will have on Aviva's investment decisions going forward.

The Chair thanked Mark for his overview which helpfully noted where there may be challenges in attracting investment in the current market, but also gave some positive and clear direction as to where the opportunities might lie. The group thanked Mark for his overview and welcomed the offer for the Alliance team to facilitate further discussions on specific investment opportunities in their city outwith the meeting.

7. Department for International Trade – Investment opportunities

The chair introduced Anthony Danahar, Principal Advisor to the Department for International Trade and Executive Chairman, ING Media, who talked about the changes to the investment biosphere, how this relates to the UK Government's new investment strategy including its priority sectors in relation to Scotland and the impact COVID-19 was having on investor appetite. Reference was also made to a new unit planned for no. 10 Downing Street dealing specifically with investment across several areas, one of which is regeneration and city growth. Finally, Anthony commended the collective work of the Scottish cities to attract investment via the Alliance's investment promotion activity which he attributes to making a significant difference in terms of the visibility of the Scottish investment offer and generating an investor appetite to learn more.

The Chair then welcomed Ummar Hanif, Real Estate Specialist at the Department for International Trade (DiT) who spoke about city investment propositions, the UK Government's experience of packaging propositions between major conurbations to show scale and the use of joint venture arrangements to bring the right partners on board which could be used to increase inward investment in Scotland. Reference was also made to the DiT having flexibility regarding the £100 million threshold for projects it would support cities to promote. The group welcomed the overview provided, referencing opportunities at a metropolitan scale across their city region which would be transformative that they would be keen to work closely with the DiT to secure investment in. The Chair thanked Ummar for his overview and advised that the Alliance would facilitate follow up discussions for city Leaders with the DiT as appropriate.

8. AOB

There was no other business to report.

9. Dates of Future Meetings:

- Leadership Group meeting – 18th November – Glasgow or MS Teams – tbc.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting finished at 12.30 pm.