



**Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting
Wednesday 15th September 2021 – 9.30 am – 11.30 am (MS Teams virtual meeting)**

Attendance:

Cllr Jennifer Laing	Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr John Alexander	Leader, Dundee City Council (Chair)
Gregory Colgan	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Cllr Adam McVey	Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Andrew Kerr	Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh 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

Also in attendance :

Emily Wilson-Gavin	SSE (item 3)
Edward Black	SSE (item 3)
Andrew McKenna	SSE (item 3)
Matt Toombs	COP26 Unit (item 4)
Fabrizio Piccarolo	Director, Lombardy Foundation for the Environment (item 5)
Gavin Slater	Glasgow City Council
David Littlejohn	Perth & Kinross Council
Stephen White	Scottish Government
Iain McCreaddie	Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance
Lauren Pascu	Scottish Cities Alliance
Veni Kojouharova	Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel Brennan	Scottish Cities Alliance

Apologies received from:

Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Cllr Susan Aitken	Leader, Glasgow City Council
Barbara Renton	Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross Council
Kate Forbes	Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy

1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies

The Chair welcomed the group, noted apologies as detailed above and welcomed Lauren Pascu, the Alliance's new Inward Investment Lead.

2. Note of Previous Meeting – 11th March 2021

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

Item 3 - Following Arup and Legal & General's attendance at the last meeting, follow up meetings have taken place with some cities. Remaining cities should contact the Alliance's Inward Investment Lead Lauren Pascu if they would welcome a 1-2-1 introduction.

Item 4 – Following Iain Stewart MP’s presentation at the last meeting, the Alliance will be looking to follow up his offer to have a further conversation with city leaders to take stock, learn lessons and shape future process following the initial round of bids submitted in June. The group noted that Richard Lochhead MSP is also keen to speak to Leaders about EU replacement funding.

3. COP26 Sponsor – SSE – Emily Wilson-Gavin, Head of Corporate Affairs, SSEN Distribution and Edward Black, Head of Corporate Affairs SSE Energy Solutions (Distributed Energy) with Andrew McKenna, Senior Business Development Manager SSE Energy Solutions (Distributed Energy)

The Chair welcomed Emily Wilson-Gavin, Edward Black, and Andrew McKenna, from SSE who outlined their ambitions to contribute to the net zero agenda with examples given of the type of low carbon solutions and innovations they have brought to cities and local authorities as part of their ‘whole system thinking’ approach. A focus of the presentation was their draft business plan for 2023-2028 which outlines how SSE will make £4.1 billion of investments to ensure that they are fit for the future.

SSE outlined two key events they will be delivering during COP26:

- 2nd November, Blue Zone, where a 5-year knowledge-sharing partnership, the “International Community for Local Smart Grids”, will be launched;
- 4th November, SSE offices in Glasgow, where a roundtable session will take place, focussing on equitable transition and innovative projects. Invitations were extended to City Leaders to attend the programme on the day which would include networking opportunities.

In discussion the following key issues were raised:

- Legacy opportunities stemming from COP26 for Scottish cities to engage with, including learning from the International Community for Smart Grids and the work of the bus decarbonisation taskforce.
- The challenges cities face regarding grid capacity to meet their immediate carbon targets over and above national targets. SSE noted that every year National Grid produces a document which plots different routes to get to net zero which is then used as the basis for SSE’s work with local authorities to plan investments in the right areas. In addition to planned investments, uncertainty mechanisms are in place which can be tapped into if needed without costs being charged to customers, allowing more flexibility in the investments made to ensure that the right low carbon projects are being taken forward.
- The importance of being able to look into different technologies and innovative solutions and roll these solutions out at scale. Cities noted an interest in being considered as pilots for testing some of these new solutions. The use of battery technology to postpone the need for grid reinforcement was raised as an example.
- The importance of tackling fuel poverty and partnering and investing with partners best placed to deliver key actions needed to address this issue including whole building retrofit. City local authorities mentioned a desire to look at how their local capacity to produce energy might translate into tackling fuel poverty at a local level and deliver a just transition.
- Supporting smaller power generation companies with the expectation that future networks will be more decentralised and locally based.
- SSE’s draft business plan recognises the challenges the Scottish public sector is experiencing to transition to net zero and includes embedded whole systems support services for local authorities as one of its six customer value propositions.

The Chair thanked SSE for their presentation and for the discussion and welcomed their offer to explore these topics further with the Leaders in the future.

4. **Matt Toombs, Director Partnerships and Engagement, COP26 (30 min)**

The Chair welcomed Matt Toombs, Director, Partnerships and Engagement, COP26, who spoke to the group about the wider COP programme, the five COP26 themes and the focus of COP26: ensuring that countries have made net zero commitments, that they would follow through to meet their 2030 interim targets and ensuring that practical concrete plans sit under these commitments. The role of cities in achieving net zero and in driving national action was noted. The UK Presidency's engagement programme for COP itself is in the final stages of development and opportunities will be extended to Scottish cities where there is scope for them to get involved.

In discussion, the potential to achieve both a sustainable and economic legacy from the UK Presidency was touched upon. Additionally, the Leaders raised the importance of ensuring that citizens understand the importance of COP26 to their city including the role that their local communities can play in contributing to the UK's transition to net zero. Leaders extended an offer to work with the COP26 unit to disseminate key messages to their communities and engage them in showcasing activity on the ground as part of the UK's Presidency's comms plans for COP.

The Chair thanked Matt for his time and indicated that the cities would be happy to continue the engagement in the weeks ahead and get involved in supporting the UK Presidency Programme.

5. **Fabrizio Piccarolo, Director, Lombardy Foundation for the Environment, [Under2 Coalition](#) Member**

The Chair thanked Fabrizio Piccarolo for joining the meeting and invited him to speak about Lombardy's net zero journey including adopting a new Energy and Climate Plan in the region in line with the European Green Deal. Fabrizio outlined the importance of international partnerships such as the Under2 Coalition of which Scotland is the European Co-chair and spoke about Lombardy's participation in COP26 as part of the UK-Italy partnership.

The group thanked Fabrizio for his insight and his overview, welcoming the 'thinking global, acting local' approach.

6. **Director's Report**

The Chair invited Iain McCreddie, Programme Director, who spoke to the report tabled and gave an update on key activities of particular interest to the city Leaders at his time including:

- **Scottish Schools Hydrogen Challenge** – it was noted that the Alliance has been working closely with Arcola Energy, Scottish Power, ITM Power and the Hydrogen Accelerator to deliver this programme across the Scottish cities in the lead up to COP26. Regional finals have taken place in some cities to date with more planned in the coming weeks. The grand final will take place in Glasgow on 30th October. Opportunities for Leaders to support the programme and participate in comms aimed at inspiring the next generation of renewable energy engineers in their city were shared.
- **Carbon Literacy training for Elected Members** – the Alliance is continuing with the delivery of the training programme in partnership with the Improvement Service targeted at elected members across all 7 city local authorities. Further sessions are scheduled to take place in October 2021.
- **London Real Estate Forum 28th – 30th September** – the Alliance is working closely with SDI and Scotland House to develop a programme of activity for the London Real Estate Forum in London, at which all city Leaders will be in attendance. The Alliance is hosting two events as part of the programme, a briefing pack for which will be issued ahead of the event. The Chair welcomed the strong Scottish participation at the forum which will maximise opportunities for the cities.

The group noted the update and the budget to 30th June 2021 was approved for publication on the Alliance's website.

7. AOB

- **Next Steps EU Life** - The Alliance Programme Director updated the group on the support provided in March by the Alliance for 4 cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) to work collaboratively with Climate-KIC to submit an application to the EU LIFE Programme (one of the main international sources of funding identified in the Funding and Investment Strategy). Unfortunately, the application was unsuccessful on this occasion, but the Scottish Government indicated that it is open to the cities coming forward with an alternative proposal for utilising the €5m of match they had confirmed for the bid to unlock additional funding to deliver the bid's ambition. The city CEOs have agreed that the Alliance should support all 7 cities to identify an appropriate funding route to target which might utilise the Scottish Government match and assist the cities to deliver at pace their climate change activity. An update on progress will be given at the CEO meeting on 6th October.
- **City Centre Recovery Taskforce** - The Chair invited Stephen White from the Scottish Government who updated the Leaders on the progress with the actions agreed at the last meeting of the Oversight group with Kate Forbes MSP on 26th August. The Leaders noted the intention to have a draft action plan and report ready by end of September and for work to commence on the most pressing 1-year actions in advance of a further meeting of the Oversight group with Kate Forbes at the end of October. The Scottish Government are giving consideration to the funding and resource recommendations and an update on these will be given to the Oversight group in October. In discussion, a point of clarification was raised about the involvement of the Scottish city BIDs in the consultation phase of the report. The Scottish Government agreed to clarify the point raised and ensure that appropriate engagement with city BIDS is made as part of the implementation of the Taskforce's action plan.
- **MIPIM 2022** – The Chair advised that SDI and the Scottish Government are giving consideration as to whether they should develop a Team Scotland offering at the event scheduled for March 2022 and asked Leaders to share their city's thoughts on supporting a Team Scotland presence at this event with the Alliance team as this will help inform the investment promotion programme for 2022.

8. Dates of Future Meetings:

- City Centre Recovery Taskforce with Kate Forbes – 26th October 2021 – MS Teams
- COP26 Networking Leadership Group event – Date and Location TBC

The meeting finished at 11.30 am.