



**Note of the Scottish Cities Alliance Leadership Group meeting  
Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 – 9.30am – 11.30am**

**Attendees :**

Cllr Ian Yuill	Co-Leader, Aberdeen City Council
Jim Johnstone	Service Manager, Aberdeen City Council
Cllr John Alexander	Leader, Dundee City Council (Chair)
Gregor Hamilton	Head of Planning & Economic Development, Dundee City Council
Cllr Cammy Day	Leader, The City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Altany Craik	Fife Council - Dunfermline
Ken Gourlay	Chief Executive, Fife Council - Dunfermline
Sharon Thomson	Glasgow City Council
Cllr Raymond Bremner	Leader, Highland Council - Inverness
Malcolm MacLeod	Executive Chief Officer, Highland Council - Inverness
Cllr Grant Laing	Leader, Perth & Kinross Council
Thomas Glen	Chief Executive, Perth & Kinross Council
Cllr Chris Kane	Leader, Stirling Council
Carol Beattie	Chief Executive, Stirling Council
Iain McCreaddie	Programme Director, Scottish Cities Alliance
Lauren Pascu	Investment Lead, Scottish Cities Alliance
Gillian McCallum	Policy & Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Scottish Cities Alliance
Eve Jones	Project Officer, Scottish Cities Alliance
Isabel Brennan	Admin & Finance Officer, Scottish Cities Alliance
Graham Smith	Head of Investment, International & Innovation, Glasgow City Council
Kezia Williamson	Innovate UK (items 1-3)
Megan Kearns	Innovate (items 1-3)
Bob Martin	Innovate (items 1-3)
Terry Hogg	Scottish Enterprise (items 1-3)

**Apologies :**

Mairi McAllan MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero & Energy, Scottish Govt
Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Greg Colgan	Chief Executive, Dundee City Council
Andrew Kerr	Chief Executive, The City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr David Ross	Leader, Fife Council – Dunfermline
Cllr Susan Aitken	Leader, Glasgow City Council
Annemarie O'Donnell	Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council
Derek Brown	Chief Executive, Highland Council – Inverness

**1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and apologies were noted as detailed above. It was further noted that Neil Gray MSP had been due to attend the meeting prior to the recent Cabinet reshuffle when his portfolio changed to health. Mairi McAllan MSP is the new Cabinet Secretary with a portfolio responsibility for cities but was unable to attend today. The Chair has written to Mairi McAllan since she took on her new portfolio welcoming her to the Alliance partnership and extending an invitation to the Perth Museum event on 20th March.

## 2. Note of Previous Meeting (9<sup>th</sup> March 2023)

The note of the previous meeting was approved and an update on items not covered elsewhere on the agenda was given as follows:-

- **Item 4 – Community Wealth Building** – Since the discussion Leaders had with Tom Arthur MSP in March 2023 the Scottish Government consultation on Community Wealth Building has concluded and it was noted that the Scottish Government is currently analysing the high volume of respondent’s feedback in relation to the proposed duty to advance Community Wealth Building including on how that model can develop and evolve going forward. This is something the Alliance will continue to follow up and engage with as it progresses.

## 3. City Region Innovation

The Chair welcomed Kezia Williamson, Innovate UK, Terry Hogg, Scottish Enterprise and Graham Smith, Head of Investment, International and Innovation, Glasgow City Council and invited them to speak about the approach cities including Glasgow have taken to the development of City Region Innovation Action Plans with a view to sharing the learning behind how other city regions might best approach this and to inspire thinking around how best the agencies and city regions work collaboratively in this space.

The Chair welcomed the presentation, noting the key message from the agencies around the purpose of the plans being to enable all partners in a region to align shared priorities and agendas and co-create programmes for funding and resource to enable delivery. It was further noted that the challenge for the Glasgow City Region was resourcing the engagement of relevant stakeholders in the development of the plan across the region as well as developing the plan based on what the data was saying about the region’s priority clusters and existing and emerging specialisms. The Glasgow City Region was fortunately able to draw on the expertise of its regional intelligence hub to understand the data but it found it challenging to identify resource to work with stakeholders to develop the plan and understands that going forward it needs to explore more innovative ways to share resources to support stakeholder engagement activity.

In discussion the following points were raised:-

- The Glasgow City Region Innovation Action Plan has been set in terms of the next UK Government review period over the next 5 years with flexibility built in to be able to respond to opportunities as they emerge at a regional level.
- A clear steer was given to cities around the “homework” they should undertake to progress their own plan recognising the challenges around resourcing undertaking the “homework” at a city region level including the need to get better at finding more agile and creative solutions to addressing that resource barrier working with wider partners.
- It was acknowledged that the colleges have a big part to play as they sit at the epicentre, sometimes more than the universities, in terms of honing the skills required to realise the priority cluster opportunities detailed in the plans. A city region’s ability to support the colleges to work together to pursue funding opportunities collectively can pay dividends. In Glasgow, they have had some recent success in coordinating 6 colleges to access £1.2 million of funding to deliver innovation and business skills within the colleges which will assist underserved communities access the jobs of the future.
- Scotland is unique in the UK landscape in that like England there is enough critical mass for there to be an opportunity to look at this at the regional and national level which is why there is a tripartite approach with Scottish regions, Scottish Enterprise and Innovate UK. At present, there is only a national approach with the devolved government in Wales and there will be a similar national approach in Northern Ireland.
- There is an opportunity to combine data and learning from action city regions are taking on the inclusive economy to assist deprived communities to cut out some of the duplication and find resource to support action on regional innovation action plans across stakeholders.
- The Alliance is a useful forum for Scottish Enterprise and Innovate UK to utilise to understand how all city regions leverage in the right skill sets and start to build the Scotland wide approach to join up the understanding of the priority clusters across the city regions including with the Glasgow City Region Action Plan.

- Once each city region is in a position to clearly articulate its vision in a regional action plan, the convening power of the Alliance to facilitate conversations with investors and developers is strengthened at events such as Scottish Cities Week, as all 8 cities would be in a position to talk knowledgeably about their area's sectoral strengths and how they inter-relate with other regions. This is a powerful proposition to investors.

The chair thanked Graham, Kezia and Terry for their contribution to the discussion today which built upon discussions at Scottish Cities Week in London. and encouraged further discussions to take place with the Alliance team to explore how both the data and resource capacity challenges to developing the plan may be overcome through discussion and collaboration.

#### **4. Scottish Cities Alliance – Business Update**

##### **a. Scottish Cities Week**

The Chair noted that feedback from Scottish Cities Week has been really positive and that the Alliance team had responded comprehensively to the feedback and direction given from Leaders following the 2023 event programme. The City Leaders noted the positive feedback from officers from both government and SDI on the 2024 programme referencing a desire to build on their feedback to further improve the collaboration with governments and agencies in a future programme which included in person Ministerial attendance to enhance the collective message around the investment opportunity in Scotland City Leaders are promoting.

City Leaders feedback on the programme was largely reflected in that which was provided by City Officers and noted in the paper tabled. They acknowledged that there was a real momentum and positive reception from the private sector behind Scottish Cities Week taking place in London in January and confirmed their support for building upon this next year subject to fine tuning some parts of the programme including:-

- Consideration should be given to further develop the collateral for the programme to ensure it is in the right format to enable developers, investors, governments and agencies to engage and builds on the messaging from the format and structure of this year's programme. Importantly it should showcase the partnership working taking place at both a city region and cross city level to attract the investment needed to address the challenges and opportunities across the Scottish cities.
- Consideration being given to the most suitable dates for a 2025 programme which balances the desire to maintain the momentum gathered around hosting a programme at the end of January with wider commitments of City Leaders at this time as well as optimising Ministerial engagement opportunities.
- Leaders are supportive of the core elements of the programme being centred around green investment but acknowledge that the hook needs to be broad enough to ensure it provides space for the cities to speak about the breadth of opportunities in their city.

The group was invited to share further feedback on the 2024 Programme to the Alliance team and noted that further detail on plans for the 2025 Programme will be shared with the City Leaders following further discussion with the Investment Promotion Working Group in April.

##### **Perth Museum – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

An update on arrangements for the networking investment event taking place at Perth Museum prior to its official opening was provided. The event aims to provide an opportunity for Alliance partners to invite investors and wider contacts established at Cities week and more broadly to a reception in Scotland ahead of onward site visits to the cities. A link to the event invite was shared on MS Teams for Alliance partners to extend to investor contacts they would like to invite to the reception.

## **b. Policy Plan 2024-2025**

The Alliance's Policy & Stakeholder Engagement Manager spoke to a paper tabled providing a range of options the Alliance could explore to raise the profile of the role Scotland's cities can play in shaping policy in 2024-2025 within Parliaments and Further Education alongside plans to launch a Peer-to-Peer offering to facilitate knowledge exchange centred around the objectives of the City Centre Recovery.

The City Leaders welcomed proposals around the Peer-to-Peer offering and provided clear direction of where they felt most value could be derived from the proposals related to raising the profile of the policy priorities of cities within Parliaments and Further Education institutes. It was agreed that the Alliance team should look to revise the proposal based on the direction from City Leaders and where the Alliance team feels most impact could be achieved before discussing the proposal with the Scottish Government and advancing activity.

## **c. 3Ci Membership Renewal – 2024-2025**

The Programme Director spoke to a paper prepared by 3Ci updating the group on what membership has delivered for the Alliance in 2023-2024 before seeking support for renewing the Alliance's membership of 3Ci in 2024-2025. It was noted that the Scottish Government is liaising closely with 3Ci to understand how they might utilise the Alliance's membership to advance the recommendations in the Scottish Government's Net Zero Investment Panel.

In discussion City Leaders sought wider information on the benefits and value all partners had received from the membership before they felt in a position to approve the membership for 2024-2025 noting a particular interest in understanding if there was something tangible they could work on as an Alliance with 3Ci to deliver rather than as individual cities. They were also keen to explore options for wider representation from the cities on 3Ci's governance structures as they felt this might broaden the understanding of 3Ci's activity across the partners.

## **d. Directors Report & Budget Update**

The Chair welcomed the comprehensive update from the Programme Director tabled detailing the breadth of activity undertaken since the last update report in September. The Programme Director advised that following City Leader's discussion with the Minister for Housing, Paul MacLennan MSP on 17<sup>th</sup> January, the Alliance team is working closely with the Scottish Government More Homes division to explore opportunities to align investor discussions between City Leaders and the Minister. Plans are also in place to engage with Scottish Government Economy on the wider elements of the priority recommendations in the Savills report to increase the provision of city centre housing and exploring the availability of the Minister to attend future Leadership Group meetings to maintain oversight of this issue.

The updated budget to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was noted and approval was given to publish the concise version of the budget on the Alliance website in accordance with the protocols. Finally, the group noted plans to table the annual report for 2023-2024 at the next meeting of the Leadership Group in June for approval prior to its publication.

## **5. A.O.B**

### **• UKIB**

The Chair advised that the UKIB has £4billion to deploy from the Treasury across the UK and on the back of discussions at cities week they are particularly keen to ensure that Scotland accesses its proportionate share. There is an opportunity for Scottish local authorities to access advisory services from UKIB to help package up investable propositions and infrastructure projects. The group noted that on the back of Cities Week the Alliance Team has introduced the UKIB team to various officers across the cities for further discussion and they will be in attendance at the Perth Museum networking event on 20<sup>th</sup> March to continue discussions with cities.

- **UKREiiF 2024 – 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024**

The Chair advised that the Alliance Team are working closely with the Investment Promotion Working Group on the development of the programme for UKREiiF and will provide a more detailed update on plans in March.

## **6. Dates of Future Meetings**

- **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – 2-4pm – Aberdeen**

It was noted that the Alliance is in discussions around developing a programme of activity on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June in Aberdeen in partnership with the Connected Places Catapult's Joining the Dots Programme focused on the Future of City Centres and sharing experience from across UK and Irish cities. This would present opportunities for Leaders and officers across the Scottish cities to engage with their counterparts from wider cities in the UK and Ireland on the core issues of the City Centre Recovery Taskforce. Further information will be shared as soon as arrangements are signed off by the Catapult's Joining the Dots Steering Group. The group noted that the plan at present is for the programme to conclude with an in-person meeting of the Alliance's Leadership Group on 7<sup>th</sup> June at mid-day.

- **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – 9.30 – 11.30 am – MS Teams or in person (TBC)**

The meeting finished at 11.40 am.