



# Annual Report 2024 - 2025



scottishcitiesalliance

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# Foreword

It is with great enthusiasm that I present this Annual Report as the recently appointed Chair of the Scottish Cities Alliance, a partnership that continues to champion Scotland's cities as the economic powerhouses of the nation.

Scotland's economic future will be shaped by trade and investment, innovation, AI, and place-based regeneration, each essential on its own, but together, they form a powerful force for progress. Over the past year, we have expanded our reach, influence, and deepened relationships with cities and wider public, private and academic partners, providing a valuable forum to ensure there is parity of opportunity across Scotland's cities and their regions to collaborate to find solutions, attract investment and create economic growth.



Tackling two of the most pressing challenges facing Scotland's urban centres - revitalising city centres and mitigating the cost-of-living crisis remain at the heart of our discussions, driving our collective efforts to identify solutions that foster economic resilience and urban regeneration. Through strategic collaboration, we have championed the policy and funding priorities required to address key issues such as repopulating city centres; facilitated discussions on how researchers and local policymakers can deepen collaboration to drive city growth and investment; and facilitated Scotland's cities to deepen relationships with cities across the UK and Ireland, facilitating peer-to-peer learning on best practice to ensure Scotland's cities remain vibrant, sustainable, and competitive.

Our cities are not just responding to shifting economic conditions, they are leading the way in finding solutions, attracting investment, and unlocking Scotland's full potential. A strong focus on sustainability and decarbonisation continued to shape our programme discussions this year, particularly at the roundtable dinner at V&A Dundee, where experts explored large-scale retrofit strategies to drive a wellbeing economy and at the Liveable City Conference, hosted in Glasgow and Stirling in partnership with the Royal Danish Embassy, which brought fresh perspectives on sustainable urban development. I'm proud of the track record the Alliance has in leading the way in developing solutions including the delivery of the £39.6 million "Scotland's 8th City – the Smart City" ERDF Programme, and facilitating the establishment of the Climate Delivery Framework and Scottish Climate Intelligence Service, all made possible by the partnership's commitment to creativity, collaboration, and problem solving.

Meanwhile, our focus on investment attraction has never been stronger. Our investment promotion programme, including UKREiF Leeds 2024 and Scottish Cities Week London 2025, has provided opportunities for all of Scotland's cities to engage with investors managing portfolios exceeding £1 trillion. We have built relationships with Amazon Web Services, Asanti Data Centres, Maya Capital, and Mubadala Investment Company, and secured high-profile media coverage in CoStar, fDi Intelligence, and The Herald. Scotland's position as a leader in urban innovation and infrastructure was reinforced at events like JLL's "Going for Growth: Enabling Infrastructure", exploring the role of real estate, housing, and energy transformation in economic development, and the Burns Supper at the Guildhall which we co-hosted with the City of London Corporation, blending tradition with entrepreneurship, highlighting the powerful potential of Scotland's university spinouts and investment-backed startups.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the Scottish Cities Alliance will continue to lead from the front, strengthening local and national partnerships, championing smart and sustainable investment, and shaping policy to ensure Scotland's cities remain globally competitive. The achievements outlined in this report reflect the determination, innovation, and ambition of our cities - and with this momentum, the future looks brighter than ever.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grant Laing".

**Councillor Grant Laing, Chair - Scottish Cities Alliance**

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

## Investment Promotion

- Built relationships with investors via our events programme including introducing the Alliance partners to investors such as **Amazon Web Services**, **Asanti Data Centres**, **Maya Capital** and **Mubadala Investment Company** with a combined investment portfolio of over **£1 trillion** and supporting ongoing dialogue across cities.



*The Alliance Chair giving welcome remarks to delegates at the Alliance's panel discussion focused on the investment opportunities linked to Scotland's Green Freeports and Investment Zones.*

- For the third year in a row, the Alliance supported the cities to raise their profile at **UKREiiF 2024** in Leeds which was attended by over 10,000 delegates including investors, developers, agents, occupiers and local authorities. Our 2024 presence included:

- A session as part of the official UKREiiF programme on Green Freeports and Investment Zones, facilitated by Ibrahim Mohamed, Associate Director, **Connected Places Catapult**, the panellists, Dame Susan Rice, Chair, **Forth Green Freeport**; Rosa Rotko, Energy Transformation Specialist, **Mott MacDonald**; Alisdair McIntosh, Programme Director of Green Freeports and Investment Zones, **Scottish Government**; and Cllr Raymond Bremner, Leader, **Highland Council**. The panel session provided an opportunity to set out how these initiatives, supported by £370 million in seed funding, will catalyse the transition to sustainable energy and create high quality jobs across the Scottish cities.
- A session at the Invest Glasgow Exhibition Stand, which featured speeches from **Cllr Susan Aitken**, **Cllr John Alexander**, and **Cllr Raymond Bremner**, who each underscored the vast opportunities across Scotland's cities in innovation, life sciences, and the net-zero energy transition;

- Networking events hosted by **Phoenix Group** and in partnership with the **National Wealth Fund** and the **Key Cities** network, which fostered key partnerships, with discussions taking place on the net-zero transition and improving infrastructure across cities; and
- Meetings with journalists from **fDi Intelligence** secured for the Leaders of **Glasgow** and **Inverness**, and with **SmartCitiesWorld** secured for **Dunfermline**. Post-event journalist meetings secured with **fDi Intelligence** and **Estates Gazette (EG)** for **Dundee**. Investor meetings with **ASDA** secured for both **Dundee** and **Glasgow**, as well as a meeting between **Langham Hotels** and the Chair.



*Networking events were hosted at UKREiiF 2024 in partnership with Phoenix Group, and with the National Wealth Fund and Key Cities*

- In January 2025, the Alliance hosted the third annual Scottish Cities Week programme in London, uniting City Leaders, officials, and private sector representatives to showcase investment opportunities. The event, centred on the Scottish Government's Green Industrial Strategy, featured collaboration with key partners like **DBT**, the **City of London Corporation**, **CBRE**, **JLL**, **Arup**, and **3Ci**. Moderated by Prof. Greg Clark, the programme drew **117 participants** from **89 organisations**, with **89.3% from the private sector**, fostering dialogue on investment and partnerships. Highlights of the programme included:
  - A launch event involving **Crown Estates Scotland**, **Forth Green Freeport**, **Natwest Group** and **Great British Energy** which showcased the Green Industrial Strategy, its alignment with the strategic objectives of Great British Energy and highlighted developments across the cities which illustrate why Scotland is at the forefront of the global transition to net zero. Key organisations in attendance included, **National Energy Systems Operator (NESO)**, **Legal & General**, **SSE**, **Association of British Insurers**, **E.ON**, and **Mubadala Investment Company**;

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025



Cllr Grant Laing, Alliance Chair, delivering welcome remarks to open Scottish Cities Week 2025

- A networking reception hosted by **CBRE**. Companies in attendance included **Montane Partners, Orion Capital Managers, Get Living, Siggis Capital** and **Cruden Group**. The reception showcased the importance of public - private partnerships to attract investment to Scotland.
- A networking breakfast hosted by the **Department for Business and Trade** and involving senior officers from the **Office for Investment** and the **National Wealth Fund**, outlining how their recently restructured teams could work closely with Scottish cities to attract investment to Scotland;



Yesterday was a busy one, but delighted to have had the opportunity to speak with the Scottish Cities Alliance. Some fantastic and rich content on the inclusive growth potential in our Scottish cities.

*Positive sentiments expressed by JLL UK Head of Research & Strategy about engaging with the partners at Scottish Cities Week*

- A private roundtable, hosted by **Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland Kirsty McNeill MP**, brought city leaders and **Tom Arthur MSP** together for a deep dive into collaboration between the Scottish cities and UK and Scottish Governments. It provided a valuable opportunity for Alliance partners to strengthen relationships and explore fresh avenues for co-operation – laying the groundwork for future action on attracting investment and driving growth across Scotland’s cities.



Alliance Leadership Group alongside Kirsty McNeill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland

- Partnered with **JLL** on a “Going for Growth: Enabling Infrastructure” event which provided a dynamic deep dive into the forces shaping Scotland’s economic future. The event explored how real estate and infrastructure act as powerful catalysts for growth—covering urgent housing demand, government-backed urban regeneration, and the transformative rise of green data centres and energy infrastructure. Industry thought leaders from **JLL, Arup, and Asanti** shared cutting-edge insights, while representatives from **Amazon Web Services, Google, Maya Capital, and Osborne Investment Management** engaged in forward-looking discussions.



I've had a fantastic week at the **Scottish Cities Alliance** annual meeting in London. It was wonderful to connect with professionals from both the private and public sectors, all eager to tackle the same challenges. We had some truly fruitful conversations about how these sectors can collaborate—whether the issue is purely financial or if changing the policy environment can be a real catalyst for change. I found the breadth of discussions fascinating, especially the intersectionality of the housing crisis, energy security, and employment. "Collaboration" was the standout word of the first day, and I'm returning to my day job with a renewed focus on staying engaged and not getting lost in my inbox.

**#SCW25**  
More feedback from private sector guests sharing their positive impression of Scottish Cities Week

- A Burns Supper at the Guildhall, co-hosted with the **City of London Corporation** which combined tradition with innovation. Discussions focused on Scotland’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, from translating research into economic value to leveraging investment capital for start-ups tackling environmental and social challenges. Highlights included the **Immortal Memory** by **Dr Poonam Malik** and the **Address to the Haggis** by **Cllr Raymond Bremner**. Attendees—**Phoenix Group, CPI Enterprises, Hypa Asset Management, Seraphim Space, Fintech Growth Fund, and Big Issue Invest**—engaged in impactful conversations, fostering collaboration and investment opportunities.



Cllr Raymond Bremner delivering the Address to the Haggis, held at the Guildhall, City of London, during Cities Week 2025

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

- Original collateral for Scottish Cities Week helped drive a marked increase in the visibility of our social media activity. On LinkedIn we received, **an estimated 12,000 impressions** across 52 posts generated both by the Alliance team and the Alliance partners, with an increase of **website traffic of 365% in January compared to the previous month.**

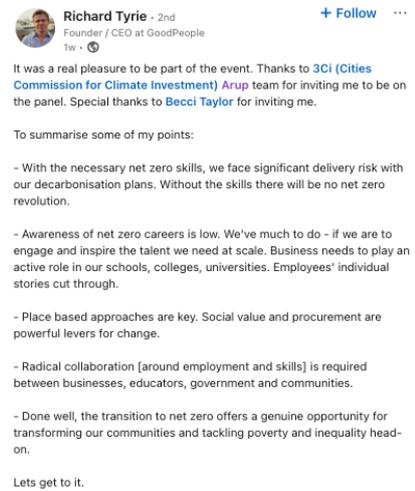


A LinkedIn post by Tom Arthur MSP following his participation in Scottish Cities Week 2025

- The roundtable dinner at **V&A Dundee**, hosted in partnership with **Arup**, brought together Scotland's City Leaders, the City of London Corporation, and key public and private sector organisations to tackle place-based decarbonisation and large-scale retrofit. With **Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman of the City of London Corporation**, as guest of honour, discussions focused on advancing a thriving, wellbeing economy through climate action. Key themes included scalable decarbonisation initiatives, solutions for diverse neighbourhoods, enhancing community sustainability, and strengthening collaboration and governance - all vital for shaping Scotland's future. Attendees included the **Scottish National Investment Bank, 3Ci, Built Environment – Smarter Transformation, Scottish Futures Trust, National Wealth Fund and SOLACE.**
- The Alliance worked with the **Royal Danish Embassy in London** to bring their **Liveable City Conference** to **Glasgow** and **Stirling** in November. The conference aimed to unite key stakeholders in architecture, urban planning, and design and provided a valuable opportunity for the Scottish cities to explore innovative strategies for creating sustainable, regenerative, inclusive and efficient urban

spaces. **Denmark's Ambassador to the UK Renè Dinesen** participated in the events, alongside Glasgow City Council **Leader, Cllr Susan Aitken**, and **the Lord Provost of Stirling, Cllr Elaine Watterson.** Organisations in attendance included **Sweco UK, Vattenfall, Arup, Velux, Ramboll and Hydrock.**

- Secured a number of opportunities for cities at wider investment and development events including an opportunity for an officer from **Dundee**, to speak at the **Construction News & Property Week Conference**, on Life Sciences & Research Clusters, and invitations for all City Leaders at the **Scottish Property Federation's Annual Dinner**, providing a valuable opportunity to engage and network with over **400 industry professionals from leading companies in Scottish real estate.**



Positive feedback from one of our day 3 speakers at Scottish Cities Week

- Developed valuable relationships for the Alliance partners at a place-based investing meets housing event with **Trowers & Hamlins, The Good Economy and Social Investments** on their housing portfolio in Scotland.



City Leaders and City of London's Policy Chairman at dinner hosted with Arup at V&A Dundee

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

## Media Coverage

- Secured a number of opportunities to raise the profile of cities in publications including:
  - Ahead of Scottish Cities Week 2025, a [thought leadership article](#) in [CoStar](#) with Chair, Cllr Grant Laing in which he reflected on the standout infrastructure investment that took place in Scotland's cities in 2024, and the importance of City Regions Deals and other strategic funding interventions. CoStar news provides comprehensive data-driven coverage of the sectors, markets, transactions and dealmakers driving commercial real estate, and reaches over 651,000 monthly unique website visitors.
  - Cllr Bremner was [quoted](#) in a **fDi intelligence** article after UKREiiF, discussing Sumitomo's commitment to invest £350m into a new subsea cable factory at the port of Nigg to serve the area's burgeoning offshore wind industry. fDi Intelligence reaches a global audience of over 9,000 cross border investment decision makers with each print edition, and over **40,000** unique online visitors each month.
  - A thought leadership article, in [The Herald](#), by John Alexander. The piece reflected on his tenure as Chair of the Alliance, highlighting the achievements, challenges, and the importance of empowering our cities as the key drivers of Scotland's economy.
- Worked with cities to develop original case study content to promote wider investment in their city including:
  - [Aberdeen – A life sciences success story;](#)
  - [Dundee's Gaming Sector;](#)
  - [Glasgow: a city where innovation has diversity at the core](#)
- Developed original collateral for the Alliance website to showcase cross-city activity across a range of sectors and projects including:
  - [Delivering Retrofit at Scale in Scotland: A Crucial Step Towards Net Zero](#)
  - [Scotland's aerospace industry has lift-off](#)
  - [How is Scotland's gaming industry taking it to the next level?](#)
  - [The renewable energy revolution sweeping Scotland's cities](#)
  - [Scotland's Green Industrial Strategy: Building a Sustainable future across Scotland's Cities](#)
  - [The renewable energy revolution sweeping Scotland's cities](#)

- [How Scotland's universities create a world of opportunities through entrepreneurship and innovation](#)
- [The Life Sciences Breathing Life into the Scottish Cities' Economies](#)
- [Enabling Infrastructure: How Scottish Cities are building a bright future](#)
- [A Year in Reflection Scottish Cities Alliance 2024 highlights](#)



*Denmark's Ambassador to the UK alongside Glasgow's Lord Provost at the Liveable Cities Networking Reception in Glasgow City Chambers*

- Continued to build our media presence, as well as developing a regular **investment newsletter** distributed to over **285** primary investment contacts on the Alliance's database profiling investment opportunities, case studies and unique collateral on the Scottish cities.
- Worked with the UK Government to map activity taking place across the **Aberdeen** City Region to generate new collateral similar to the Glasgow City Region and South East Scotland City Region which can underpin the Alliance's investment promotion material on the website. The Alliance plans to build on the experience working with UK government to develop the Aberdeen [map](#) to produce similar maps for the other 3 city regions.
- The Alliance has built a valuable **database of 384 investors**, developers and asset managers and continues to utilise intelligence from **CoStar** to track the Scottish cities latest real estate information and analytics to engage existing contacts and identify new investors with an interest in Scotland.
- The Alliance Team has continued work to ensure the Alliance website better reflects the approach the Alliance is taking to support the partners to attract investment and foster economic growth in Scotland, building on its enhanced understanding of the investor market gained from the team completing **FDI training**.

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

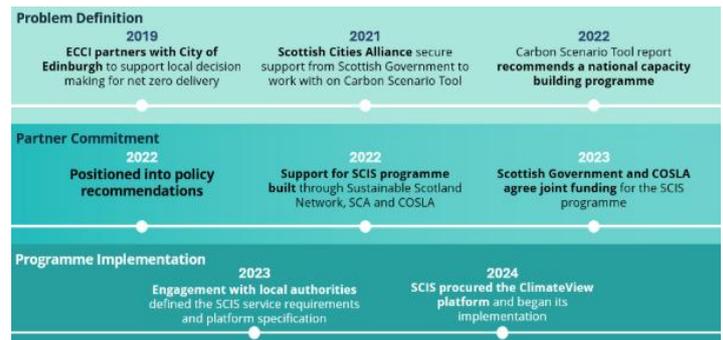
## Smart Cities Scotland

### Scotland's 8<sup>th</sup> City – the Smart City ERDF Programme

- Delivery of activity across 'Scotland's 8<sup>th</sup> City – the Smart City' programme was completed, in line with Scottish Government/Managing Authority requirements, in June 2023. The final 8<sup>th</sup> city Programme [Newsletter](#) provides a complete overview of the successes of the programme to date including delivery of **39 projects, 96 new innovative services** and the publication of **331 data open for innovation** as of June last year. Upon receipt of the final closure report for the programme, the Alliance will seek opportunities to update the partners on the final outputs and next steps.

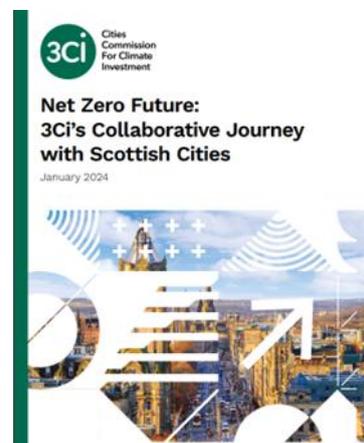
### Transition to Net Zero

- The Scottish Government and CoSLA held the first meeting of the Political Oversight Group for the [Climate Delivery Framework](#) in December involving Cllr Susan Aitken as the city Local Government representative on the group. The framework is built on work undertaken by the Alliance in 2023 and will oversee the most critical parts of managing and funding the climate crisis, including how Scotland makes more rapid progress in decarbonising key sectors such as transport and heat.
- The Alliance continues to support Scottish Government and CoSLA as they look to progress delivery of activity via the framework including connecting in with discussions around the policy and delivery structures at the UK level to secure private finance to deliver Net Zero.
- The Improvement Service, in partnership with the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, formally launched the [Scottish Climate Intelligence Service \(SCIS\)](#) in Spring 2024, building on work undertaken by the Alliance to develop the business case and secure funding from Scottish Government and all 32 local authorities. The SCIS aims to support local authorities to build capacity to improve decision-making for area-wide emissions reduction by providing the data and tools, and building the skills and confidence, to deliver better climate outcomes and realise the social and economic benefits of a zero-carbon economy. Read more about how the SCIS is supporting cities [here](#).



Timeline outlining the role the Alliance played in establishing the SCIS

- Supported the development of key relationship between **Scottish Government Net Zero and Investment Directorates, 3Ci, ECCI, Scottish National Investment Bank, UK Infrastructure Bank, BE-ST, Innovate UK, the Scottish Research Alliance for Energy Homes and Livelihoods, the Improvement Service, ClimateXChange, Scottish Futures Trust, Department for Business and Trade and CoSLA** to ensure there is coordinated discussion on the Net Zero agenda to address key barriers to delivery including:-
  - Briefing Scottish Government officers on the work of 3Ci to position its programme with the new UK Government administration to allow the Scottish Government to consider alignment with its own plans.
  - Linking up discussions between **Scottish Government Net Zero and Investment, 3Ci, ECCI and SNIB** around supporting local government to access the skills and capacity they need to bring forward a net zero investment pipeline. Following discussions at the Alliance's CEO Group in November, the Scottish Government considered a proposal from 3Ci and ECCI centred around supporting the establishment of Net Zero Demonstrator Programme built around the robust Scottish cities pipeline published by 3Ci at Scottish Cities Week 2024.



# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

- To develop understanding on local action being taken to by local authorities elsewhere in the UK to apply 3Ci's model to decarbonise a local area, facilitated a tour of the Somers Town Net Zero Neighbourhood project for City Leaders profiling initiatives including Somers Town Energy, retrofitting and climate resilience infrastructure. The Alliance will continue to work closely with the 3Ci partners to develop the understanding and appetite to take a neighbourhood-wide approach to decarbonisation, including sharing learning from the Glasgow investment case for Govanhill.
- Facilitated discussions between the Alliance partners and the **National Wealth Fund** aimed at increasing understanding around how they can support investment in a programme of net zero projects at a city/city region or cross city level building on similar programmes they have funded such as the Green Finance Fund with the Greater London Authority and in West Suffolk.
- Worked closely with the [Climate Emergency Response Group](#) to develop its recommendations to ensure the cities in Scotland are empowered to unlock the finance needed to drive action on climate change, mitigation and adaptation.
- Worked with the **Department for Business and Trade and the Office for Investment** to facilitate an opportunity for cities to inform the 10-year plan to deliver the UK Industrial Strategy.
- Supported representations to the UK Government seeking parity of representation for the local leaders of Scotland's cities at the **Council of Nations and Regions and International Investment Summit events**. Separately, an offer was extended on behalf of the Alliance partners to work with the Scotland Office on the development of arrangements for the Global Investment Summit it plans to host in Edinburgh in autumn 2025 which has been accepted.
- The Alliance has developed a **policy tracker** to monitor key policy developments by the UK Government and facilitate opportunities for the Alliance partners to engage at appropriate points.

## City Centre Recovery Taskforce

- Following completion of work funded and led by **Glasgow and Stirling** aimed at enabling the cities to increase residential capacity in their city centres and address vacant and derelict land issues, the Alliance developed an outline proposal with **Scottish Futures Trust** to support the delivery of transformational regeneration across key urban sites across the cities. Consideration on next steps is paused following publication of the Scottish Government's Housing Investment Taskforce report and updated policy analysis from the Fraser of Allander institute which will help inform next steps.
- In partnership with CBRE, hosted a special roundtable focused on Innovation in New Housing Delivery. The event explored key topics such as new models to stimulate development, legislative differences between England and Scotland, and insights from the Homes England experience and included contributions from senior representatives from Homes England and Muse. Representatives from **Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling, Dunfermline, Aberdeen, Dundee, and Inverness** attended the event helping to bring different regional perspectives to the discussion.

## Policy and Stakeholder Engagement

### UK Government and Scottish Government Engagement

- Developed relations with the Scotland Office including via a roundtable for City Leaders with **Kirsty McNeill MP, Permanent Undersecretary of State of Scotland** at Dover House, London, and as part of **Ian Murray MP, Secretary of State for Scotland's** Roundtable Discussions with key stakeholders in Edinburgh, promoting opportunities to work with the Scottish cities and Scottish Government via the Alliance on shared priorities around economic growth and investment.
- Secured a meeting for the Chair of the Alliance with **Alex Norris MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**. The meeting was used to discuss opportunities for closer working with the Alliance partners around the development of thinking on future structural funds as well as supporting the delivery of growth sectors, regional clusters and strategic industrial sites as part of the UK Industrial Strategy. The Minister has confirmed his attendance at a future Leadership Group meeting to take this initial discussion forward with all partners.

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

- Peer-to-peer network activity aimed at supporting the delivery of strategic objectives in the City Centre Recovery Taskforce Report continued, with the aim of supporting the sharing of knowledge and best practice from Scottish and international cities, which draws upon expertise from academia and the private and third sectors; and identifying and agreeing opportunities for future collaborative action. The peer-to-peer programme is co-developed by the Alliance partners working closely with **Innovate UK**, the **Built Environment- Smart Transition Innovation Centre** and the **Connected Places Catapult** to leverage in wider experience from UK and Irish Cities, as well as research and knowledge exchange networks. Activity delivered includes:-



Officers from Aberdeen, Dunfermline, Dundee, and Glasgow represented the Alliance at Joining the Dots Connected Places Catapult Programme in Leeds.

- Building on the Alliance’s established relationship with the **Connected Places Catapult** and British Embassy in Dublin’s [Joining the Dots programme](#), the Alliance supported the Scottish cities to host a 2 day programme in **Aberdeen** focused around sharing best practice and experience on City Centre Recovery and involving representatives from all 8 **Scottish cities, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Donegal, Belfast, Bristol, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Liverpool Combined Authority and Portsmouth**. As part of the programme, City Leaders attended a Civic Reception and joined a city tour of Aberdeen which, in addition to enabling the city to showcase positive action to support the regeneration of its city centre, also provided an opportunity to view exhibits from the city’s **Nuart Festival** which was taking place at the same time.

- The Alliance, in collaboration with **Innovate UK’s Virtual Forum for Knowledge Exchange in Mathematical Science (V-KEMS)**, hosted a 3-day challenge event bringing together math practitioners to tackle key issues facing Scottish city high streets using data driven solutions. City officers from **Dundee, Glasgow, and Perth** proposed challenges, including assessing the impact of retail and leisure developments outside city centres on investment strategies and exploring ways to repopulate urban areas. The event provided valuable insights, leading to funding support for two master's students in Dundee to further investigate the effects of external developments on city centre strategies.



Cllr John Alexander, Dundee City Council, representing the Alliance at Joining the Dots, Connected Places Catapult Programme in Aberdeen

- Following on from this event, the Alliance supported **Aberdeen, Dunfermline, Dundee and Glasgow** to participate in a [Joining the Dots](#) programme in Leeds in November on sustainable transport, providing an opportunity for Glasgow to speak about its work on the Clyde Metro and for the cities to understand how Bradford is using connectivity and culture to drive city centre regeneration linked to its UK City of Culture status.

## Wider Policy

- Developed a [joint communication](#) with **Universities Scotland** to help inform the UK Government’s consideration of the Migration Advisory Committee’s recommendations on the **Graduate Route Visa Scheme** which saw the UK Government in May confirm that the scheme would remain unchanged for all Universities. The Alliance will continue to identify similar opportunities to this where the Alliance partners can use their united voice to inform and influence policy.
- The **Scottish Policy Research Exchange (SPRE)** and the Alliance co-hosted an online workshop bringing together **70 researchers and local policymakers from Scotland’s cities** to strengthen research-policy engagement. The workshop highlighted examples of successful research engagement with local policymaking across **Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow** and provided a forum to discuss the support researchers and local policymakers would welcome to support wider research engagement at a city level in Scotland. Building on discussions from the workshop, the Alliance arranged for representatives from **Policy Leeds and Leeds City Council** to provide insight to the Leadership Group on the funding models which supported policy engagement

# Scottish Cities Alliance – Key Achievements – 2024-2025

in England between local government and universities and how this is supporting Leeds to create economic growth and investment. The Alliance and SPRE will continue to facilitate discussion on initiatives in Scotland which can deepen collaboration and drive impactful policy solutions for Scotland's cities.

- The Alliance Programme Director was invited as the only Scottish representative to sit on the Advisory Board established by the **Connected Places Catapult** to inform the development of its Strategy. The Alliance used its position to ensure the strategy was linked in with key stakeholders at both the local and national level in Scotland including **BE-ST** and **Codebase** as well as to further develop connections and opportunities for the Alliance partners to benefit from the Catapult's work.
- Supported **Codebase**, responsible for running the Scottish Government's **Techscaler** programme, to run a [workshop](#) in August with **city officers** aimed at fostering discussion around how an upskilling programme for the digital transformation of SMEs might be supported at a city region level. The workshop findings helped Codebase garner valuable insights on the Scottish SME market and stimulate thought at the national level around how the ecosystem in Scotland is supported through a period of significant technological transition.

- Via **Edinburgh's** membership of the **Global City Network for Sustainability** the Alliance was able to share learning on how cities internationally are tackling the Transition to Net Zero challenge with officers across the Scottish Cities.



*The City of Edinburgh Council representing the Alliance at the G-NETS Leaders Summit in Tokyo, May 2024*



*Officers from across Scottish Cities attending Codebase workshop in Stirling, August 2024*

- Under the strategic Leadership of Aberdeen, the Alliance worked with the Fraser of Allander Institute on the third edition of the Scottish Cities Outlook report to ensure that the Alliance's work continues to be informed by up-to-date policy analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing Scotland's cities.
- Informed by 1-2-1 discussions with City Leaders and CEOs over the summer, the Alliance worked with **Scottish Enterprise** to share knowledge with cities around how local government can link in with the delivery structures to capitalise on investments being made in **Scotwind**.

## **Budget – 2024-2025**

The Scottish Cities Alliance budget is managed by Dundee City Council and reported on a quarterly basis. Following changes in October 2022 to the hosting arrangements of the Alliance core team and budget management, the CEO Group agreed that it was necessary to update the budgeting and governance arrangements to allow harmonisation of the budget management.

Therefore, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 the Operational Budget and the original Cities Investment Fund (CIF) were merged into a single budget reporting structure and this was ratified at the CEO Group meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

### **Funding Sources**

£7 million was provided for the original CIF budget by the Scottish Government when the Alliance formed in December 2011. The purpose of the fund remains unchanged and it continues to be used to leverage additional private finance and/or funding as well as support collaborative projects and activity which will allow for wider city region investment.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021, the Leadership Group agreed to reinvest in both the CIF and Operational Budget for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 based on contributions from the then 7 Scottish cities which were to be matched by the Scottish Government. Dunfermline (Fife Council) joined the Alliance in 2022 and contributes to the budget on the same basis as the original 7 Scottish cities, giving a total annual reinvestment of £420k.

The Alliance budget report to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 reported a balance of funding available of **£391,300** however, it should be noted that a portion of the balance will be required to cover approved funding for the Operational Plan through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.