



Glasgow City Council

**Economy, Housing, Transport and
Regeneration City Policy Committee**

**Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods,
Regeneration and Sustainability**

Contact: Mandy MacDonald Ext: 7744

Item 2

22nd April 2025

GLASGOW CITY CENTRE STRATEGY 2024 to 2030 UPDATE

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the progress of the City Centre Strategy 2024 – 2030 (CCS24-30).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the contents of the report
- (ii) Consider the progress made by the CCS24-30 from November 2024 to March 2025
- (iii) Note that biannual updates on progress will be submitted to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee for the duration of the CCS24-30

Ward No(s): 10

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.2 Members may recall that the update for the *City Centre Strategy 2024 - 2030* (CCS 24-30), approved by the City Administration Committee on 21 March 2024, was presented to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration Policy Committee on 19 November 2024
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide the second biannual progress update of the new Strategy.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 The **CCS24-30** serves as the overarching strategy for city centre regeneration until 2030. It is guided by the **City Centre Strategic Development Framework (SDF)**, which sets strategic planning priorities.
- 2.2 The vision is built on three key **Pillars**:
 - 2.2.1 **Magnetic Experience**: Enhancing the city's appeal with engaging attractions and experiences
 - 2.2.2 **Front Door to Innovation**: Encouraging an innovative approach to development, a mix of digital, life sciences, climate science, and creative industries alongside arts, engineering, and business
 - 2.2.3 **A Place to Live**: A sustainable, inclusive, and well-connected approach to regeneration that supports a growing population
- 2.3 The strategy outlines **19 Priority Actions** to drive these goals and ensure effective resource allocation.

3 PROGRESS REPORT

3.1 Governance

- 3.1.1 The City Centre Task Force (CCTF) and its thematic Sub-Group structure are the strategic body with oversight over City Centre Strategy, co-chaired by Councillor Angus Millar, City Convener for Climate, Glasgow Green Deal, Transport and City Centre Recovery, and Stuart Patrick, CEO of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. In addition to the Sub-Group workplans, the CCTF has set out four high priority actions for delivery over 2025 as follows:
 - (i) Improve look/feel/experience of the city centre prioritising key transport gateways
 - (ii) Launch marketing campaign
 - (iii) Improve transport offering
 - (iv) Night-Time Economy
- 3.1.2 These items reflect the feedback from recent research exercises and post-pandemic public perception surveys, both of which have reinforced the need to:

- (i) better support the night-time economy
- (ii) promote the city centre offer
- (iii) improve transport operations particularly in evenings and at night-time, and
- (iv) enhance the look and feel of the city centre.

3.1.3 Fuller updates on these items are provided as part of the Priority Action updates below.

3.2 The following section provides a short update for each Priority Action, structured under each of the three pillars.

3.3 Magnetic Experience

3.3.1 Glasgow's 2024 sales performance was down in comparison to 2023 but 2024 was a challenging year for all city centres and our comparator cities shared a similar downturn. In terms of footfall the picture was not as positive. The city centre's performance was down on 2023 and not as good as our comparator cities or the UK High Street average. The drop in sales was always lower than the drop in footflow indicating that the city centre remains attractive to shoppers and those enjoying the food and drink sectors.

3.3.2 *Avenues Programme and George Square redevelopment:* these major public realm projects are covered by a separate annual reporting programme to EHTR, [link](#) to most recent update on the 19th November 2024.

3.3.3 *District Regeneration Frameworks (DRFs) Programme*

- (i) The **Townhead Greening and Connectivity Project** focuses on delivering the enhanced public space and connectivity projects previously identified by the Townhead DRF. The design work is progressing with close engagement with the local community. The project aims to transform the currently passive green spaces in Townhead into vibrant, active areas
- (ii) **Cathedral Gardens** design contract has been completed to RIBA stage 2 and options are being assessed for the next stage of work
- (iii) **Hielanman's Umbrella:** RIBA Stage 4 design contract now complete and signed off. Design now transferred to Network Rail for delivery. Network Rail have assembled a project team and have devised a procurement strategy with contract award expected July 2025 with works expected to commence late summer. Works to include shopfront enhancements, new shopfront lighting and exploration of neon light art installations. GCC will be making a financial contribution to works delivery and officers will continue to have a supporting role throughout the procurement and delivery stage. A grant agreement will be required to formalise this contribution, and this is now being progressed with Legal Services and will subsequently seek Council approval from City Administration Committee

- (iv) **Gateways to City Centre:** gateways to the city centre have been recognised as intervention priority areas. Design work has commenced on Gordon Street (Hope Street to Renfield Street) and on the link between Argyle Street West Avenue and the Liveable Neighbourhoods active travel network to the west of the Kingston Bridge
- (v) **A Business Improvement District (BID)** is a business-led and business-funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. A BID Steering Group has been established to develop a BID and to take it to ballot in late 2025. If the BID ballot is successful the private sector will generate new, ring-fenced funds for the city centre, to be spent on priorities of their choosing. The Council will be represented on the BID as it moves through development and if approved, delivery
- (vi) The **City Centre Improvement Grant Fund** has been developed to improve the look and feel of the city centre. The grant is composed of two categories, each with a dedicated webpage: Minor Improvements and Meanwhile Use. The Minor improvements category supports place-based improvements in the city centre, while the Meanwhile Use category supports bringing vacant and unused buildings back into productive use. To date, 55 organisations have engaged, resulting in 34 applications (28 for Minor Improvements, six for Meanwhile Use). Seven applications are currently being considered and seven more have been awarded funding. A comms plan is being developed to target the creative industries and a dedicated event to support the project has been arranged in the Sauchiehall Heritage and Cultural District Project Space, in collaboration with GCC Business Support.

3.3.4 River Corridor

- (i) RIBA Stage 3 (Developed Design) for the Custom House Quay and Carlton Place project commenced in August 2024 and concluded in March 2025. During this timeframe, a comprehensive statutory consultation process was undertaken to assist in shaping the designs and the upcoming Planning Application, which will be submitted in Qtr 1 25/26

3.3.5 Tourism and Events

- (i) Significant progress is being made against the Glasgow 2030 Tourism Strategy and supporting Tourism Action Plan April 2024 - March 2026
- (ii) The estimated economic benefit from delegate spending between 1 April 2024 and March 2025 is £150 million
- (iii) *Commonwealth Games 2026*
 - Glasgow 2026 local organising body is established with a senior Executive team in place
 - Glasgow Life are engaging with key partners (Glasgow 2026, Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government)
 - Senior Events Lead (Projects) has been appointed to establish Glasgow Life's 2026
- (iv) *UEFA EURO 2028: UK & Ireland*
 - Glasgow confirmed as one of nine host cities for the tournament
 - Glasgow Life working UEFA, Scottish FA, and government bodies

- Host city commitments include a fan zone, football village, and trophy tour
- (v) *Michelin Guide Ceremony Great Britain & Ireland 2025*
 - This is the first time that Scotland has hosted the prestigious event, held at Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum
 - Strong partnership with Scotland Food & Drink and Scottish Government — Michelin's first 'strategic host city' partnership in the UK, creating blueprint for future editions in the context of feedback that Glasgow has set a new benchmark for the event
 - The resulting significant media coverage has showcased the city's food and drink scene, while strengthening the city's destination profile
 - 600 guests, including Michelin-star chefs and media, attended the ceremony and after-party at the Old Fruitmarket
 - Local restaurants Cail Bruich and Unalome retained their Michelin stars; GaGa & Margo received Bib Gourmand
- (vi) *Winter 2024*
 - Additional funding secured for an immersive lighting installation, 'Stargyle Street' on Argyle Street
 - The installation increased footfall and received positive media and social media coverage
- (vii) *Winter 2025*
 - Engagement with the hospitality and retail sectors started in March
- (viii) *Celtic Connections & Emirates Arena*
 - Over 100,000 tickets sold across 160+ events
 - Peat & Diesel concert at Emirates Arena — first music event of its kind at this venue, with 4,300 tickets sold
 - Potential to use emirates arena which has 5,000-capacity for future Celtic Connections events.

3.3.6 Cultural and Heritage

- (i) The Heritage Lottery Fund award of £350K development funding for the Heritage and Culture District project in Sauchiehall Street has allowed a dedicated team to be set up by Glasgow Life. The team is developing the bid for the second phase of the project in close partnership with NRS and Heritage Fund colleagues. The current exploratory phase will lead to a Proof of Concept bid to be submitted in August 2025 to run for 18 months from December 2026. The larger NHLF bid will then be submitted in August 2026

- (ii) **Digital Creative Cluster:** The Culture and Heritage Quarter within the Sauchiehall district is home to a diverse range of high-quality cultural venues, institutions, and internationally recognised companies. This cluster has the potential to drive economic growth and support city centre's vitality by enriching the city with cultural assets of national and global significance. To maximise its impact, stakeholders will be encouraged to collaborate through a Cultural Coalition, which will coordinate and implement a local strategy to promote the area as a cultural destination. Initiatives will include a dedicated umbrella website featuring an events programme and a place-based cultural events calendar

3.3.7 People Friendly Zone

- (i) The RIBA Stage 2 designs have now been completed for both WNS & the People First Zone.
- (ii) For West Nile Street, the team has applied to Transport Scotland's Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) for funding to undertake RIBA Stage 3 in 2025/26.
- (iii) Funding options are currently being explored for the People Friendly zone (PfZ). As the PfZ is an area-based project, it includes multiple interventions within the designated area. These include improvements to Gordon Street, which are now being taken forward by the Avenues Team, Hope Street, which is being led by the Sustainable Transport Team, and Union Street, which is being overseen by GCC Planning.

3.4 Front Door to Innovation

- 3.4.1 Glasgow is among the top three fastest-growing tech investment hubs in the UK. The actions below will allow Glasgow to maintain its position as the number one large city for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

3.4.2 Innovation and Digital

- (i) *Glasgow City Innovation District* have been rapidly delivering across the four key pillars of activity under the Venture Studio model: *Challenge, Make, Innovate* and *Impact*
- (ii) Some early outputs/outcomes from the *Venture Studio programme* include: 22 businesses have received grants; 51 entrepreneurs have been assisted to be business ready; 306 people have attended training sessions; 10 businesses are in the process of adopting new to the firm technologies or processes

3.4.3 Wellbeing Economy

- (i) Challenges and opportunities are being explored within the foundational economy in the city centre. As part of this work, engagement has taken place with two organisations that gather skills data to assess their potential contribution to research on the skills needs and gaps among employers in the area. Additionally, the team is liaising with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to design an appropriate way forward in addressing these needs

- (ii) An attitudinal survey will be delivered by the end March to gather insights from employability service providers and their customers regarding the barriers faced by job seekers in applying for or securing employment in the city centre. It will explore whether individuals with barriers to work view city centre employment as a viable option or if factors such as location, working hours, and childcare obligations present additional challenges

3.4.4 Development Team

- (i) A cross-service *Development Team* (DT) has been set up to focus resources on maximising development opportunities.
- (ii) *Strategic Sites Assessment*: several vacant and blighted sites in private ownership across the city centre have been highlighted through the Golden Z report as requiring targeted intervention. Each of these key sites are being assessed in terms of ownership, policy context, strategies, project opportunities, planning applications, pre-planning applications, site constraints and opportunities. 45 sites are currently being monitored by the Development Team, through regular communications with site owners, developers and agents. Of the original 17 sites highlighted by the Golden Z report, eight are actively moving forward, with proposals being discussed internally and commercially confidential at this stage
- (iii) *Additional powers* are being sought and, in some cases, utilised. Discussions have begun with UK and Scottish Governments on the scope for amended or new legislation, regulation or policy instruments that would support development. As a practical example of progress in this area, a recent [Contracts and Property Committee report](#) agreed to the investigation of CPO powers on a long term vacant property in the city centre.
- (iv) *Develop Glasgow website*: Work is ongoing to deliver a seamless experience by optimising the Invest Glasgow website, the Planning and Building Standards pages, and other relevant sections of the existing Glasgow City Council website. This approach will provide comprehensive toolkits to assist external parties with conversions, meanwhile uses, and achieving net zero objectives, while also addressing funding and development constraints.
- (v) *Innovative Finance Mechanisms*: The Development Team is exploring innovative financial solutions to support city centre development, with a particular focus on repurposing. They are collaborating with Lar Housing Trust to understand how their financial models could be adapted by others including housing associations to facilitate conversions. In addition, the team is working with colleagues in GCC Sustainability to explore climate finance options. The Development Sub-Group is also advocating for the introduction of financial support programmes for example a revised Business Premises Renovation Allowance (BPRA) scheme. Originally designed to support business premises development, the updated BPRA or similar could be repurposed to aid conversions from commercial to residential properties.

- (vi) The new *Rapid Repairs pilot project* was approved at EHTR on 19/11/24 and CAC on 24/11/24, with a dedicated webpage launched in February 2025. A street audit, conducted in consultation with the Developers Forum, focused on the city centre's key streets identified as having the greatest impact on attracting investment, has now been completed. Colleagues in Roads Contracts, Assets & Lighting are currently developing a repair schedule, including associated costs and a delivery timetable

3.4.5 Property Repurposing Action Plan

- (i) The *Property Repurposing Action Plan* has now been absorbed into the Development Team remit. Six actions have been directly transferred for delivery by the Development Team, fourteen actions have been completed and eleven are currently being progressed
- (ii) *Office And Employment Uses*: Office vacancies, and upper floor vacancies, have been mapped further to the recommendations of the Ryden Report¹. The Development Team is working closely with colleagues in Housing Services to identify conversion opportunities, with mapping helping to recognise clusters of opportunities. The map will be updated every six months with the latest data sourced from COSTAR.

3.5 A Place to Live

3.5.1 City Centre Living

- (i) Work is continuing with partners to determine suitable affordable Housing sites within the city centre with a key focus on Sauchiehall Street and the surrounding area including Blythswood and Central districts, and an update on the Local Housing Strategy is due to be heard at committee today. Work is also continuing to establish the feasibility of other sites which might be suitable for private conversion and determine potential development partners
- (ii) West of Scotland Housing Association are progressing plans for their affordable housing pilot at St Enochs Square. Discussions are also still ongoing with GCC/City Property and Wheatley Group over the acquisition and conversion of two former commercial units at Trongate and Duke Street to convert these into affordable Housing
- (iii) Ryden have completed the second stage report which was in relation to the development of archetypes across the city centre, where a number of vacant office premises have been identified. However, this analysis has not identified any isolated clusters of fully vacant office accommodation which would allow a targeted intervention. Further work is being considered to address the sporadic vacancies in upper floors to determine if a solution can be found to consolidate these and free up the full building for repurposing

3.5.2 Sustainability

- (i) *Net Zero Routemap*: A report was published and shared with the Net Zero Committee November 2024. Findings are being reviewed, and outputs will be considered in the new version of the Climate Plan

¹ Ryden, *Glasgow City Centre Property Repurposing: Office Vacancy Report* (September 2024)

- (ii) *Glasgow's Climate Plan*: the Annual report was presented to Net Zero Committee November 2024 and an updated version considering outputs from the Net Zero Routemap will be provided to Committee in April 2025
- (iii) *GCC Carbon Management Plan*: The Carbon Management Plan 3 was approved by the City Administration Committee in March 2024. A working group is managing the 27 actions and progress on the first year of implementation has been reported to the Climate & Sustainability Board, responsible for oversight of the CMP3. The plan is intended to be adaptive and additional actions, or sub-actions, will be incorporated into the Plan as suitable GCC and ALEO projects are identified

3.5.3 Local Community Projects

- (i) The *High Street Reference Group* has continued the work originally carried out through the High Street Area Strategy. It receives updates across several themed workstreams
- (ii) The *Glasgow Begging Strategy* concluded its original 5-year Action Plan in March 2025, and an update report was provided to WECCE Committee on 6 March 2025 detailing outputs achieved to date and proposed next steps
- (iii) *Busking initiative*: pilot project activity concluded September 2024 and an update report on findings and proposed next steps was taken to EHTR Committee on 11 March 2025
- (iv) A new commercial model is in development for *Dressing the City*, the city's street bannering programme. Tender proposals continue to be developed towards understanding likely delivery timescales in 2025
- (v) *Good Food Glasgow*: A new high quality street food vendor project to be managed by a market operator is being developed. Again, tender proposals continue to be developed towards understanding likely delivery timescales in 2025

4 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 4.1 City centre performance monitoring is assessed at macro level through the open dashboard which can be accessed [here](#). This dashboard tracks a range of quantifiable indicators that provide an ongoing record on some key themes: people movement, spending, tourism, and development. This is a free resource for anyone to access
- 4.2 In addition to the dashboard, each Priority Action within the CCS 2024-30 will be delivering outputs and outcomes. This extensive list is being developed into a shortlist that can be reported upon in future CCS updates to Committee, as part of an overall monitoring and evaluation framework for the overarching city centre. This focused monitoring plan will be reported back to this committee as part of the biannual updates

5 POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>Financial:</i> | There are no immediate financial implications. |
| <i>Legal:</i> | There are no immediate legal issues, and these will be assessed as individual projects are developed. |
| <i>Personnel:</i> | None. |
| <i>Procurement:</i> | Procurement resources will be required to progress individual contracts and related project activity. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Council Strategic Plan: | <p>The CCS cuts across many areas of service and embeds many of the council's missions and commitments.</p> <p>Grand Challenge One – Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities.</p> <p>Mission 3: Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.</p> <p>Grand Challenge Two – Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens.</p> <p>Mission 1: Support Glasgow residents into sustainable and fair work.</p> <p>Mission 2: Support the growth of an innovative, resilient and net zero carbon economy.</p> <p>Grand Challenge Three – Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow.</p> <p>Mission 1: Deliver sustainable transport and travel aligned to the city region.</p> <p>Mission 2: Become a net zero carbon city by 2030.</p> <p>Grand Challenge four – Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities.</p> <p>Mission 1: Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods.</p> |
|--------------------------------|--|

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i> | <p>The CCS cuts across many areas in terms of accessibility and just transition and thereby embeds many of the commitments of the Council's Equality Outcomes. It is expected that successful delivery of Key Priorities will contribute to achieving Outcome 1 by providing more employment opportunities for a diverse</p> |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|---|
| | workforce, Outcome 2 which will make our city centre more accessible to all and Outcome 6 by helping to create a more vibrant and attractive city centre with more opportunities for social interaction. |
| <i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i> | Positive impact: The CCS will improve accessibility through improved physical measures. The initial desktop screening has been completed and will continue to be updated as the strategy develops. The public consultation outputs have been added to the EQIA. |
| <i>Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.</i> | Yes, the actions in the CCS are designed to improve access to work and support the provision of new sustainable housing. It will encourage Community Wealth Building and promote environmental enhancements with inclusive growth at their heart. Specific projects in the action plan will be EQIA assessed as required. |

Climate Impacts:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:</i> | Theme 2: Just and Inclusive Place Theme 3: Well Connected and Thriving City Theme 4: Health and Wellbeing Theme 5: Green Recovery |
| <i>What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?</i> | These will be determined as the Strategy is delivered. The continuing work to develop a climate impact assessment tool will also assist in this. |
| <i>Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?</i> | Yes. The CCS contain projects that support public transport (including opportunities to explore synergies with Clyde Metro), modal shift, greening, retrofit and repurposing of building stock. |

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N | No |
| If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out | N/A |

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the contents of the report
- (ii) Consider the progress made by the CCS 24-30 from November 2024 to March 2025.
- (iii) Note that biannual updates on progress will be submitted to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee for the duration of the CCS 24-30

Enclosures: Link to **City Centre Strategy 2024-2030**