



Glasgow Economic Leadership Board

Meeting 42

Tuesday 8 October 2024, 08.30 - 10.00

Conference Room 8, Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC)
99 George Street. G1 1RD

Present

Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal, University of Strathclyde - co-Chair)

Cllr. Susan Aitken (Leader, Glasgow City Council - co-Chair)

David Bunton (CEO, Reprocell Europe)

Andy Cliffe (CEO, AGS Airports Ltd.)

John Howie (Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Babcock International)

Selma Hunter (CEO, Hunter Consultancy)

Guy Jefferson (COO, SP Energy Networks)

Janice Kirkpatrick (Director, Graven)

Jim McColl (Chairman and CEO, Clyde Blowers Capital)

Stuart Patrick (CEO, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce)

Apologies

Susanne Millar (CEO, Glasgow City Council)

Jane Martin (MD Innovation & Investment, SE)

Mark Napier (MD Global Technology, JP Morgan)

Attending

Kevin Kane (GEL)

Alison McRae (CoC)

Kevin Rush (GCC)

Paul Zealey (SDS)

Guests

Ben Johnson (UoS)

Graham Smith (GCC)

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

- 1.1 GEL Co-Chair, **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed all to the meeting including **Ben Johnson** who would brief the Board on his observations of the new UK Government and **Graham Smith** who would present on Glasgow's new International Strategy.
- 1.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** informed the Board of his intention to retire in August 2025 after sixteen years as Principal of the University of Strathclyde. He confirmed his continuing commitment to helping Glasgow in any way that he could. **John Howie** encouraged **Sir Jim's** continued engagement with GEL and **Stuart Patrick** noted that Glasgow has a tradition of senior business figures in retirement who continued to play a critical role in supporting the city (viz. **Lord (Norman) MacFarlane**). **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that he would discuss his future role with the co-Chair, **Cllr. Susan Aitken**, who noted her desire for "continuity".

- 1.3 Apologies were noted.

2 Minute of 26 June 2024 and Matters Arising

Minute of 26 June 2024

- 2.1 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** invited the Board to approve the Minute of the Board meeting of 26 June 2024. The Minute was approved.

Matters Arising – Gillian Docherty and Uzma Kahn invitations to join GEL Innovation Group

- 2.2 **Kevin Kane** noted that draft invitations were with **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** for signature.

Matters Arising – GEL Board invitation to Mark Logan

- 2.3 **Kevin Kane** noted that arrangements were in hand with **Mark Logan** to schedule him to attend a future GEL Board meeting.

- 2.4 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that **Mark Logan** is the Scottish Government's Chief Entrepreneur and is heavily involved in supporting tech entrepreneurship in Scotland. At his and other's urging, the recent Programme for Government had allocated £25m to support a Deep Tech Scaler to be based at NMIS in AMIDS that would focus on helping to scale tech companies in TRL's (Technology Readiness Levels) 4 to 7. The Deep Tech Scaler would further reinforce GCR as a hi-tech hub.

- 2.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** also noted that he had spoken with **Andy Haldane** former Chief Economist at the Bank of England and President of the Royal Society of Arts about speaking at a forthcoming GEL Board. He noted that **Andy Haldane** is influential, familiar with Glasgow and could be a useful advocate for the city. **Janice Kirkpatrick** noted the RSA's formal title - *Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* and asked whether GEL could commission **Andy Haldane** to do a piece on Glasgow, a city he knows and loves. **Stuart Patrick** noted that **Alison McRae** is in contact with **Andy Haldane** given his involvement in the forthcoming Congress of Business event. **Action: To confirm Andy Haldane to present at the next GEL Board on 29 January 2025.**

3 GCR Cabinet Council Leaders' discussion

- 3.1 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that the Minute of the previous meeting had set out in some detail GCR's "devo-ask". In short, from Scottish Government it is for greater empowerment with fewer strings attached and additional resources, if possible. From UK Government it is for greater resources and the ability to create a 'single pot' with GCR having the ability to vire across innovation, infrastructure and social inclusion budgets, akin to the "devo deals" on offer to metropolitan regions in England.

- 3.2 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** confirmed she had sent a letter to the Prime Minister and had received a reply from **Jim McMahon MP**, UK Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government. She had also had a positive meeting with Deputy First Minister **Kate Forbes MSP** who accepted that the Scottish Government had not been as fast as it could have been in responding to GCR's "ask" for greater responsibilities for skills, enterprise, inward investment and innovation. **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that the Programme for Government commits Scottish Government to work with Glasgow

on its desire for metropolitan status – and **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted she had informally raised the issue with the First Minister, **John Swinney MSP**.

- 3.3 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that the CRG Cabinet had now formally endorsed the “ask” and she thanked **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** for his contribution to the meeting which had been a “revelation” to some Council Leaders as to the assets and opportunities available to the city region. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Cllr. Susan Aitken** for the invitation to attend and noted **Action: that his presentation to the GCR Cabinet would be circulated to Members after the meeting.**
- 3.4 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted his view that GCR’s leadership was in a strong position - with GEL providing strong business engagement and alignment – and that this should be promoted more widely to government. **Andy Cliffe** asked how the wider business community could “lean into” the GCR agenda? **Cllr. Susan Aitken** said that GEL had a key role to play as did other business bodies. With respect to Glasgow Airport, **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that she had written to **Fiona Hyslop MSP**, Cabinet Secretary for Transport to echo the airport’s concerns at the recent Scottish Government air transport “strategy”.
- 3.5 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted her disappointment that Glasgow had not been invited to the inaugural meeting of the UK Government’s new Council for the Nations and Regions that will take place on Friday 11 October 2024 in Edinburgh saying it “was not helpful”. **Stuart Patrick** asked whether the GEL Board could write to the UK Government (Secretary of State for Scotland) to request that GCR be invited? This was agreed and **Action: Kevin Kane/Kevin Rush to draft a letter for the co-Chairs to send today to the Secretary for State for Scotland.**
- 3.6 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Cllr. Susan Aitken** for her update.

4. New UK Government dynamics and early observations

- 4.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** introduced **Ben Johnson** who had been until recently a Special Adviser to the UK Science Minister and was now with the University of Strathclyde and invited him to give his observations on the new UK Government.
- 4.2 **Ben Johnson** noted that given the scale of its Parliamentary majority the new UK Labour government could be “unimpeded” in delivering its manifesto. However, it had won a “loveless majority”, is unpopular and has an unpopular Prime Minister. Currently No 10 seems to be missing a “organising mind” and this has allowed experienced Ministers/Departments to get ahead with implementing their agendas (eg the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero under **Ed Miliband MP**).
- 4.3 **Ben Johnson** noted that the machinery of government was being adapted to help deliver on the new government’s five “missions”, with new PM-chaired Mission Boards and a Missions Office established in the Cabinet Office. Of them, the most important is “to kick start economic growth” with the narrative all about investment, jobs, key sectors and industrial heartlands. Even though several Departments will “hold the pen” in delivery, HM Treasury will remain key to investment and resources.
- 4.4 **Ben Johnson** noted another key feature of the new government is its drive to deliver infrastructure and especially to deregulate/unblock planning. Deregulation and removing barriers to innovation is another area that is to be tackled.

- 4.5 One area that **Ben Johnson** noted that has benefited from strong Ministerial direction and delivery is the Department Energy Security and Net Zero under **Ed Miliband MP**. It was “rapidly building out” manifesto commitments including the creation of British Energy and [NESO](#) (National Energy System Operator) – which has opened up an office in Glasgow - and the recruitment of Juergen Maier (ex-Siemens) as Chair of GB Energy and Chris Stark as Head of Mission Control for Net Zero (ex-CCC).
- 4.6 **Ben Johnson** saw opportunities for Scotland/GCR around an increased visibility and interest in Scotland within UK Government, especially in the run up to the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary election and the continued likelihood of direct UK funding into Scotland, plus a greater desire for collaboration between UK and Scottish governments.
- 4.7 **Ben Johnson** noted that in science and innovation, policy under the Conservative government had been “a bit stop start”. The new UK Government will put significant additional funding into innovation with a greater focus on the “industry side” of innovation and those areas (like GCR) with clear governance structures will be favoured and that GCR should not be shy of pushing ideas and asks of government.
- 4.8 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Ben Johnson** for his observations and the opportunities for GCR. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that the GEL Board is a key asset, and we needed to make sure that we used it to help attract investment to the city region. He noted that relations between the Scottish and UK governments were more constructive now under the new administrations in both Holyrood and Westminster (e.g. the FM being open to his suggestion to invite **Jurgen Maier** (UK Energy) and **Chris Stark** (Net Zero Mission Control) to meet with the Scottish Energy Advisory Board).
- 4.9 **John Howie** noted that the new UK government is also interested in the greater resilience of the UK industrial base, especially its defence industrial base which it considered had been overly offshored. This, and the intention to develop Industrial Strategy Boards for key sectors gave GCR/GEL an opportunity to influence and “sell” the capabilities of the city region’s industrial and innovation base.
- 4.10 **Stuart Patrick** said that GCR should carefully follow the UK/English Devolution Bill to ensure that Glasgow benefited from the same freedoms as that offered to English metro areas.
- 4.11 **Guy Jefferson** noted that the UK and Scottish governments were talking together – as they must to hit very challenging Net Zero targets. To him Glasgow has an exceptionally strong energy/power sector with Scottish Power’s HQ (and its planned expansion into NW England), a strong SSE presence, a new NESO office and GB Energy’s new Innovation hub totalling well over 2,000 well-paid, high productivity jobs plus a strong university talent and innovation pipeline. Glasgow has a good claim to be the UK’s Electricity/Power Capital). **Selma Hunter** agreed with the scale of Glasgow’s engineering/energy capabilities but warned of the skills challenges below the level of Chartered Engineers, with many of these roles now having been offshored.
- 4.12 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that the blueprint for the UK Government’s approach to Net Zero had been informed by the Sir Parick Vallance-chaired Royal Academy of Engineering report on [The Rapid De-Carbonising of the GB Electricity System](#). The opportunities for Glasgow were huge and we needed to get that in front of senior decision makers. **Action: Professor Sir Jim McDonald proposed that over the next 6 to 9 months GEL should invite the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves MP,**

SoS for Energy & Net Zero Ed Miliband MP and the Science Minister Lord Patrick Vallance to Glasgow.

4.13

Professor Sir Jim McDonald thanked **Ben Johson** for his contribution and the views of Members.

5

GEL Innovation Group update

5.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited **John Howie** to update the Board.

5.2 **John Howie** noted that a face-to-face meeting in the City Chambers had been arranged for 8 November 2024, after the UK Budget, so the group would know what UK funding was available for the Investment Zone etc. and on what terms and timescales. **John Howie** noted his view that the group should take a strategic overview of GCR innovation activities, ensure their effective delivery, oversee metrics to measure their impact, liaise/ learn from other metro areas and be an advocate for GCR innovation activities and their impacts on growth, productivity, companies and jobs.

5.3 **Andy Cliffe** asked whether there was an opportunity to think about how we can present GCR to the investor community and what blockages GCR might be able to address - as well as the advantages that GCR can to offer. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted he had met recently with **Alistair King** the current Lord Mayor of London who is keen to promote the finance sector across the UK and **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted she had also met recently with **Chris Hayward** the political leader of the City of London (Policy Chair). **David Bunton** agreed that scale-up capital is critically important the life sciences sector. **Action: Professor Sir Jim McDonald proposed that GEL/GCR consider developing an investor conference in Glasgow.**

5.4 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **John Howie** for his update.

6

GEL International Group

6.1 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** introduced the item noting that Glasgow was currently developing a new international strategy that will be formally adopted by the Council. The intention is that a new GEL International Group under the leadership of **Andy Cliffe** will take responsibility for oversight of the delivery of the strategy.

6.2 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** invited **Graham Smith** to present the strategy to Members and **Andy Cliffe** to provide further background on the new GEL International Group.

6.3 **Graham Smith** presented on the background, structure and focus of the new International Strategy and the proposed role of the new GEL International Group. **Graham Smith** also circulated hard copies of the Strategy.

6.4 **Graham Smith** noted that the new strategy was intended to be a strategy for the city and not just the Council or GCR. The Council had engaged widely with stakeholders including business – the Chamber of Commerce had held three roundtable sessions - universities, HEIs and colleges, SE and SDI as well as Scottish and UK governments and had reviewed the approach taken by other UK cities. The key pillars of the strategy are Economic, Civic and Communities, Education, Networks and Culture and Events, with three cross-cutting themes (connectivity, pride of place and a single voice) and **Graham Smith** noted that the Strategy's vision is for "A city that flourishes on the international stage". The proposal was that GEL – via new GEL International Group led by **Andy Cliffe** – would oversee the delivery of the strategy which would

have a 5-year horizon and a 2-year Delivery Plan. He noted that the GEL International Group would be supported by officers from GCC Economic Development.

- 6.5 **Andy Cliffe** noted that the strategy and its delivery had to be “real and lasting with clear outcomes” if it was to have a positive impact on how the city is viewed internationally. A key focus for him would be FDI and trade. **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted it was a serious strategy which would have clear outcomes and impacts. **Selma Hunter** welcomed the creation of a ‘single voice’ approach and asked that innovators and entrepreneurs were engaged to help sell the city and its opportunities. **Janice Kirkpatrick** noted that the Innovation Districts were important place-based initiatives that touch a wide variety of businesses, from micro to SMEs to corporates, and that they could usefully be engaged with strategy’s delivery. **Stuart Patrick** noted the great goodwill internationally for Glasgow, something we should use to our benefit. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** asked that SE/SDI to be engaged and also perhaps DBT; **Stuart Patrick** noted the explicit interest of the Secretary State for Scotland, **Ian Murray MP**, in promoting Scotland internationally.
- 6.6 **Andy Cliffe** noted that a draft Terms of Reference had been developed for the GEL International Group and that its Membership, including core GEL Members, had not yet been set. **Action: GEL International Group ToR to be circulated to GEL Members for comment.**
- 6.7 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** thanked **Graham Smith** and **Andy Cliffe** for their updates.

7 AOB and DONM

- 7.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that the next GEL Board was scheduled to take place on **29 January 2025 (08.30-10.00)** in the Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC). There being no further business, **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** closed the meeting.
- 7.2 Dates for GEL Board meetings in 2025 have been set and communicated to Members and are as follows. All meeting to be held in TIC.

29 January 2025, 08.30-10.00

26 March 2025, 08.30-10.00

25 June 2025, 08.30-10.00

22 October 2025, 08.30-10.00

Kevin Kane
Executive Director
Glasgow Economic Leadership

October 2024