



Item 2 (a)
26th May 2026

Glasgow Economic Leadership Board

Meeting 47

Monday 16 February 2026, 08.30-10.00

Conference Room 9, Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC)
99 George Street, G1 1RD

Present

Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Principal,
University of Strathclyde / GEL co-Chair

Cllr. Susan Aitken, Leader, Glasgow City
Council / GEL co-Chair (*joined online*)

David Bunton, CEO, Reprocell Europe / *GEL
Life Sciences lead*

Chris Courtney, CEO National Manufacturing
Institute Scotland (NMIS) / *GEL Advanced
Manufacturing lead*

John Howie, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer,
Babcock International / *GEL Innovation lead*

Selma Hunter, CEO, Hunter Consultancy

Janice Kirkpatrick, Director, Graven / *GEL
Creative Economy lead*

Sir Simon Lister, MD Naval Ships, BAE

Professor Scott MacGregor, Vice Principal,
University of Strathclyde / *GEL HFE lead*

Jane Martin, MD, Innovation & Investment,
Scottish Enterprise

Professor Stephen McArthur, Principal,
University of Strathclyde

Susanne Millar, CEO, Glasgow City Council

Stuart Patrick, CEO, Glasgow Chamber of
Commerce / *GEL International lead*

Vida Rudkin, COO Global Operations / MD
Glasgow, Morgan Stanely / *GEL F&BS lead*

Professor Andy Schofield, Principal, University
of Glasgow

Apologies

Guy Jefferson, COO,
Scottish Power Energy
Networks (SPEN) / *green
economy lead*

Kam Jandu, CEO, AGS
Airports Ltd.

Jim McColl, Chairman &
CEO, Clyde Blowers Capital

Dominic McKay, CEO,
Scottish Events Campus /
GEL tourism lead

Cllr. Owen O'Donnell, Vice
Chair, GCR Cabinet, Leader,
East Renfrewshire Council

Attending

Kevin Kane, Executive
Director, GEL

Alison McRae, Senior
Director, Glasgow Chamber
of Commerce

Kevin Rush, Head of
Regional Economic Growth,
Glasgow City Region

Paul Zealey, Regional Skills
Lead, Skills Development
Scotland (SDS)

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

1.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed all to the first GEL Board meeting of 2026.

1.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed Board guest **Mark Logan**, formerly of Skyscanner and more recently the Scottish Government's Chief Entrepreneur. He would speak to item 5: developing a creative supercluster in Glasgow.

- 1.3 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** also took the opportunity to welcome **Sir Simon Lister**, MD of Naval Ships at BAE to his first GEL Board and invited him to introduce himself.
- 1.4 **Sir Simon Lister** noted that over the past five years the UK defence sector had seen significant growth. On the Clyde, BAE has developed a very capable and competitive anti-submarine ship – the Type 26 frigate – that has attracted interest not only from the UK Navy but also foreign ones viz. the £10BN order for five frigates from the Norwegian government. Over the past five years, **Sir Simon Lister** said his focus has been to restore the capability and skills of the Clyde yards, work that is “only half way complete”. Though BAE’s has large apprenticeship programmes (200 Apprentices and 120 Graduate Apprentices), work is ongoing to reduce reliance of foreign workers (e.g. welders) and to grow a locally-based, skills.
- 1.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Sir Simon Lister** for his comments and proposed that **ACTION: Sir Simon Lister and John Howie, GEL Innovation lead, jointly bring a paper to a future GEL Board on the opportunities for Glasgow City Region in the defence and security sector.**
- 1.6 **Kevin Kane** noted apologies.

2 Minute of 6 November 2025 and Matters Arising

Minute of 6 November 2025

- 2.1 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** invited the Board to approve the Minute of the Board meeting of 6 November 2025. The Minute was approved.

Matters Arising – GCR Devolution Proposal: next steps

- 2.2 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that there had been a marked contrast between the Deputy First Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland in apparent levels of engagement. The need for a tripartite approach in the devolved nations has been agreed by local leaders in Belfast and Cardiff, given the scale of UK government capital funding flows.
- 2.3 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** welcomed the **First Minister’s** announcement at the *State of the City Economy Conference* that the Scottish government would bring forward enabling legislation to allow local authorities to come together to create more empowered city regional bodies and she noted that work had already started on drafting legislation.
- 2.4 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** invited **Kevin Rush** to update the Board on GCR preparations.
- 2.5 **Kevin Rush** noted that GCR operationally is more coherent than many English city region administrations. Notwithstanding its partnership with the National Wealth Fund, GCR still has to operate across and within several different UK funding streams, rather than the single pot approach as in England.
- 2.6 **Kevin Rush** noted that GCR is taking a twin pronged approach: creating broadly based GCR work streams for skills, economic development, innovation, planning, housing, transport etc. and working jointly with Edinburgh city region on governance and finance. The work streams would take a blank sheet approach to what “good” would look like.
- 2.7 **Kevin Rush** noted that a paper was being prepared for the GCR Cabinet and that **ACTION: paper to be circulated to the GEL Board after the meeting of the GCR Cabinet.** He also noted that UK government engagement is central to this work, but

he did not expect any movement in their position until after the Scottish parliamentary elections in May 2026.

- 2.8 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** thanked **Kevin Rush** for his update and invited questions or comments from GEL Board members.
- 2.9 **Stuart Patrick** noted the importance of engaging directly with UK government especially as the Scotland Office was changing to become a delivery department. Maintaining relationships with other UK Departments (DBT, DSIT, HMT etc.) is vitally important for GCR. **Jane Martin** offered that SE “would lean into” city regional empowerment and noted it as an opportunity to align “local, regional, national and international opportunities”. **Cllr. Susan Aitken** agreed, noting it was not about replacing or superseding organisations but about coordinating and using all our assets.
- 2.10 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed GCR putting collaboration “front and centre” of its approach. It was an opportunity to demonstrate “joint-ness” across GCR and work collegiately and in complementarity with other city regions in Scotland – and even across the UK. Indeed, GCR has been disarming in its cooperative approach to regional empowerment. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** advised that GEL should be involved as it is a key intangible asset in GCR governance.
- 2.11 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** also noted and registered the interest of three GEL Board Members who are also SE Board Members – **Professor Sir Jim McDonald**, **Professor Stephen McArthur** and **Stuart Patrick** – and said that the forthcoming SE Board Strategy Away Day would focus on SE engagement with city region empowerment, with Glasgow as the exemplar. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that behaviours will really matter for collaborative regional empowerment to succeed. **Susanne Millar** agreed noting that structures should not drive behaviours and that GCR’s partnership with the National Wealth Fund identifies behaviours as one its critical “asks”.
- 2.12 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that nothing like GEL exists in anywhere else in Scotland and that it feels to her that Scottish Ministers really appreciate the existence and role of GEL. **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that at a recent two-day event in London organised by the Scottish Cities Alliance, she heard the frustration of city leaders in Cardiff and Belfast that cities in the devolved nations are not getting the same level of attention as English cities are by the UK government. **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that smaller Scottish city regions “know the direction of travel” of regional empowerment and are not concerned with the Glasgow being at the leading edge.
- 2.13 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** thanked **Kevin Rush** for his update and GEL Members for their engagement with GCR’s regional empowerment ambitions.
- 3** **Local Innovation Partnerships Fund (LIPF) and GCR Innovation programmes**
- 3.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that LIPF is a UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)-led programme and that **ACTION: a date was still to be secured for Professor Sir Ian Chapman, the CEO of UKRI to attend a future GEL Board meeting.**
- 3.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited **Kevin Rush** to update Members on LIPF and GCR’s wider innovation portfolio.
- 3.3 **Kevin Rush** noted that the £50M LIPF was now live. Its primary focus is on the Health & Life Sciences sector with £25M available to support R&D, £20M for the expansion of lab space and £5M to support skills, operating via the GCR College network and the LIPF assessment process would be that used successfully for the Innovation Accelerator and a selection panel would be identified by end-March.

- 3.4 **Kevin Rush** noted progress on the Investment Zone with the GCR Chief Executive's Group having reviewed the first business case for Semiconductor Packaging. With regard to the new tax site at AMIDS, joint work with the National Wealth Fund had indicated the need for a more strategic approach to be taken to fully exploit the opportunity at AMIDS, while **Susanne Millar** noted that at a recent HM Treasury roundtable, AMIDS was presented as one of four UK exemplars.
- 3.5 **Kevin Rush** noted an excellent UKRI visit at the end of January that visited all three innovation districts (GCID, GRID and AMIDS); feedback had been "tremendous" and had landed very well.
- 3.6 **John Howie** noted that UKRI had joined the GEL Innovation Group. To him, LIPF builds on GCR's existing innovation programmes (IA, IZ etc.). GCR governance (triple helix), delivery and co-investment have been great and the existence of a GCR Regional Innovation Action Plan has provided a strong strategic structure for all the programmes.
- 3.7 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that **Professor Louise Heathwaite**, Executive Chair of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), had commented to him of her surprise at not seeing much from GCR on Energy and Decarbonisation given the city region's significant UK-level industrial presence, research expertise and major UKRI funded programmes – this should be considered as a key opportunity going forward.
- 3.8 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Kevin Rush** and **John Howie** for their updates and Members for their engagement with the issue.

4. Developing a Creative Supercluster in Glasgow

- 4.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that **Janice Kirkpatrick** as GEL Board lead on the Creative Economy would introduce this session and then **Mark Logan** would speak to it.
- 4.2 **Janice Kirkpatrick** noted that the UK's Creative Economy is one of its most successful sectors and that Glasgow is a leading UK centre for the UK creative economy with talent nurtured at world-leading creative institutions, namely Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). These, plus the national institutions based in Glasgow – RSNO, Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet – are a vital part of the creative economy ecosystem that also supports a wide range of companies in Glasgow that do work across Scotland, the UK and around the world in music, film and design amongst other creative economy sub-sectors.
- 4.3 **Janice Kirkpatrick** felt that the scale and competitiveness of Glasgow's creative economy was too little known and under-appreciated by policy makers (at all levels) and that it would be very useful were the Intelligence Hub to map the sector and undertake a comparative analysis of Glasgow/GCR with other major UK creative economy centres.
- 4.4 **Janice Kirkpatrick** noted that many of the skills within the creative economy sector – from gaming programmers, to product designers – could also play a vital role in underpinning the transition to innovation in other key sectors, be that in Advanced Manufacturing, Health and Life Sciences or Defence industries.
- 4.5 **Janice Kirkpatrick** noted that Glasgow's creative economy is a unique USP for the city that could be better used to project the city as a vibrant, innovation- rich economy, with a strong cultural life and creative economy that attracts, develops and supports talent and underpins a great quality of life. To this end, she introduced a short film that

was projected on the Landsec-owned, large scale screen at Piccadilly Circus that projected Glasgow's creative and innovation proposition to the wider public.

4.6 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Janice Kirkpatrick** for her contribution and invited **Mark Logan** to speak to the item.

4.7 **Mark Logan** thanked the GEL Board for the opportunity to speak to developing a creative supercluster in Glasgow. Like **Janice Kirkpatrick**, he noted that Glasgow creative assets were too often overlooked be that GSA, RCS, RSNO, Scottish Opera or Scottish Ballet.

4.8 **Mark Logan** noted he had been working with GSA and RCS to look at how creative talent could be supported to develop their commercial potential and to do something to help breathe more life into Sauchiehall Street, a street that has been under significant pressure, especially since the fires at GSA, the ABC and previously Victoria's nightclub that has left this celebrated street a shadow of its former self.

4.9 **Mark Logan** noted that work is underway to bring the creative tech sectors and entrepreneurs together, for example, developing creative tech sessions with Glasgow City Innovation District's (GCID's) annual Fusion Week festival. However, to give the creative sector a better chance to develop commercial success something more permanent needs to be done.

4.10 **Mark Logan** said that creative supercluster proposal has two, linked aspects. The first is the acceleration of commercially-focused creative economy start-ups in the city, as per the several existing "accelerators" across the city. The second, is to attract more life – especially young people - to Sauchiehall Street as is currently the case in Glasgow's two other Innovation Districts, GCID and GRID. The proposed solution is to create a creative economy Entrepreneurial Incubator within a shopfront location on Sauchiehall Street (e.g. CCA or in the McLellan Works building). The estimated cost to do this would be £100,000 pa. **Mark Logan** advised that the time to do this is now or momentum would be lost.

4.11 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** noted that Glasgow City Council works closely with the creative economy, noting GCC's work with the screen sector to create a TV studio within Kelvin Hall, Glasgow Life is working with the CCA to try and resolve current issues and there has been a Council-wide effort to address Sauchiehall Street following the disastrous Art School fire which has included the Avenue investment and GCC working with both GSA and RCS. **ACTION: Cllr. Susan Aitken said that GCC would take away the proposal for an Entrepreneurial Incubator on Sauchiehall Street and pursue it at pace.**

4.12 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Mark Logan** for bringing the proposal to the attention of the GEL Board and **Cllr. Susan Aitken** for her commitment to have GCC consider the case.

5 Glasgow City Centre Business Improvement District (BID)

5.1 **Prof Sir Jim McDonald** invited Stuart Patrick to advise the Board on this new, private sector-led initiative.

5.2 **Stuart Patrick** spoke to a presentation to be circulated to Members after the meeting.

5.3 **Stuart Patrick** noted that a BID is a private sector-led, funded and managed initiative that seeks to provide services that are additional to those provided by the Council and the wider public sector. These are for the BID to choose and can range from additional security, cleanliness, promotional and other services. The Glasgow BID has proposed

four project areas: a Cleaner City Centre, a Safer and More Secure City Centre, a Vibrant and More Engaging City Centre and an (private sector) Empowered City Centre (via the BID).

- 5.4 The process to create a BID is subject to a ballot of eligible companies and in Glasgow the vote was successful with 87% of eligible companies (or 91% by rateable value) voting yes on a turnout of 39% (above average).
- 5.5 The geography of the BID roughly covers the area bounded by Sauchiehall Street/Cathedral Street in the north, the High Street in the east, to Broomielaw and Barclays campus in the south and the M8 to the west and includes many of Glasgow largest and most successful businesses and institutions.
- 5.6 The BID's Steering Group is now transitioning to becoming a formal company Board with Board nominations from eligible companies and the recruitment process for a BID Manager is underway. The Glasgow BID will have the responsibility to invest over £140M over 5 years in its chosen project areas ensuring it makes "visible and measurable impact on the ground".
- 5.7 **Stuart Patrick** noted that progress has been good and that the Glasgow BID will be launched in April 2026.
- 5.8 **Cllr. Susan Aitken** said that the Council was very supportive of the initiative and that she warmly welcomed it. **Professor Scott MacGregor** welcomed the BID and said that there was much that could be done to better present the city centre.
- 5.9 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Stuart Patrick** for his update and Members' input and welcomed the Glasgow BID as a positive example of private sector engagement in the future of Glasgow city centre, Scotland's most important economic location.

6 Interim update: GEL Finance & Business Service

- 6.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited **Vida Rudkin**, GEL Board lead for Financial & Business Services (F&BS) and the GEL F&BS work stream, to update the Board on its current work to identify its priorities for 2026.
- 6.2 **Vida Rudkin** welcomed the opportunity to update Members. Vida Rudkin noted that after a period of abeyance, the F&BS work stream had reconnected with now twenty working members represented, up by eight on previous membership. Many of the main FS brands are represented including JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, RBS, as well as smaller FinTech companies, professional services companies, legal sector, and the financial, insurance and FinTech industry bodies plus the colleges and universities.
- 6.3 **Vida Rudkin** noted that when Members met in January, they discussed what they wished their purpose to be, their voice and the priorities they wished to pursue as a group. A number of issues surfaced including: representing the sector within GEL and the wider city, developing a better "sector narrative" for the F&BS sector (based on known competence and specialities) and the impact of AI on F&BS operations in Glasgow.
- 6.4 In taking forward the conversation, **Vida Rudkin** noted that the F&BS work stream is seeking sector analysis from both the Intelligence Hub (via GCID) as well accessing proprietary information and research held by Members and hoped that the F&BS work stream would be in a position to share its final work plan with the GEL Board at a future meeting in the first half of 2026.
- 6.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Vida Rudkin** for her update.

7. AOB/ DONM

- 7.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that the new Executive Director of Education at Glasgow City Council, **John McGhee**, would be a welcome guest at a future GEL Board meeting to address the broader education, training and skills issues.
- 7.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** asked that **John Howie** and **Sir Simon Lister** bring forward a paper to a future GEL Board on the opportunities in the Defence and Security sector.
- 7.3 There being no other business, **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** closed the meeting.

Kevin Kane
Executive Director
Glasgow Economic Leadership

March 2026