



Item 7
7th November 2023

Glasgow City Region Cabinet

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Glasgow City Region Innovation Action Plan

Purpose of Report:

To ask the Cabinet to approve the Regional Innovation Action Plan, co-created with regional and national partners.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is invited to:

- approve the draft actions; and
- note the next steps.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To ask the Cabinet to approve the Regional Innovation Action Plan, co-created with regional and national partners.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Cabinet has previously received updates on the development of the GCR Innovation Accelerator programme. This has attracted almost £33 million of UK Government funding for eleven novel projects across a range of key industry sectors. The programme has drawn on strong local assets and partnership working in the City Region and has led to further collaboration to develop a regional Innovation Action Plan. This seeks to build on the momentum generated by the GCR approach to the Innovation Accelerator programme and to set a clear route map to unlock the significant innovation potential in the City Region in order to build a greener, healthier, and more prosperous place.
- 2.2 The draft plan has been co-authored by Glasgow City Region, Innovate UK and Scottish Enterprise, and developed in consultation with key stakeholders. It represents a key element in delivering on the objectives of the GCR Economic Strategy.
- 2.3 The plan responds to a widespread acknowledgement amongst partners that innovation, and raising levels of R&D spending, is critical to addressing the productivity challenge for the City Region and nationally. This will help to drive the development of novel products and processes and thereby generate new businesses, promote faster growth in key sectors, and embed innovative practices across the broader business base.
- 2.4 It is further recognised that, by maximising co-operation across the innovation ecosystem and collectively marketing GCR's innovation offer at a national and global level, an at-scale proposition comparable with any to be found elsewhere in the UK can be developed.
- 2.5 This report sets out the strategic context within which the GCR Innovation Action Plan sits, describes the process of its development, and notes the six thematic areas which partners have prioritised, together with an associated draft 34 actions.

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 The Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy sets out an ambition to become the most productive, innovative, and resilient economy in the UK by 2030. This ambition, underpinned by a commitment to developing an inclusive economy, aligns to both Scottish and UK Government priorities.

- 3.2 The Scottish National Innovation Strategy was published in June 2023. It articulates a narrative for innovation to underpin the vision of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and sets an ambition for Scotland to become one of the most innovative small nations in the world by 2033.
- 3.3 The UK Government's vision is that the UK will be a global hub for innovation by 2035. Its Levelling Up commitment is to increase domestic investment outside London and the greater south east by at least 40% by 2030, and by at least one third over the next spending review period in 2024–25.
- 3.4 The draft GCR plan sits within this increased focus on place. It will act as a focal point for partners, industry and investors and build on the City Region's significant innovation assets and strengths.

4. Engagement and Development

- 4.1 The success of any innovation action plan relies on strong partnership working. In that spirit, and learning from the process of selecting the Innovation Accelerator projects, officers of Glasgow City Council chaired a Regional Planning Group, comprised of representatives from:
- Glasgow City Council
 - Scottish Enterprise
 - Innovate UK
 - University of Glasgow / Glasgow Riverside Innovation District
 - University of Strathclyde / Glasgow City Innovation District
 - University of the West of Scotland
 - Glasgow City Colleges Partnership
 - Glasgow City of Science and Innovation
 - Connected Places Catapult.
- 4.2 This group has met on a regular basis to establish the priority areas and key actions for the proposed plan. Through the Glasgow City of Science and Innovation partnership a series of roundtable sessions were also curated in May 2023. These sessions brought together 120 senior voices from business, academia, third sector, the investor community, and local and national government.
- 4.3 The contributions of all these stakeholders have directly shaped the priorities and actions contained in the plan. Throughout, partners have emphasised the many strengths that Glasgow City Region currently has in supporting innovation and actively sought to ensure that the action plan sets out the highest level of ambition for communities across the Region.
- 4.4 The action plan is not 'owned' by any single institution or body. It draws on the collective ownership of the three co-authoring organisations and the key partners whose continued involvement will be crucial to the success of the plan.

5. Clusters

- 5.1 Glasgow City Region has tremendous strengths in key sectors, and as a result continues to grow strong clusters of innovative businesses. The plan seeks to harness and exploit those strengths in order to maximise their spill-over effects and support prosperity in the wider economy.
- 5.2 The GCR Intelligence Hub has conducted a thorough analysis of sectoral clusters in order to consolidate understanding of those in which the City Region has a competitive advantage. This forms the basis of their moving beyond recent growth, ensuring that they are aligned with national priorities and growing the potential for further exports.
- 5.3 This work has identified five key clusters, comprising a mixture of sectors with strengths, existing specialisms, and emerging specialisms. These clusters are:
- Health and Life Sciences
 - Energy and Net Zero
 - Digital Creative Industries
 - Advanced Manufacturing and Precision Engineering
 - Digital and Enabling Technologies and Services.
- 5.4 The plan emphasises the significant strengths and opportunities within each sector and highlights particular case studies of success, with the aim of further attracting innovative businesses to the City Region and catalysing a confident and bold innovation culture.

6. Priority Areas and actions

- 6.1 Glasgow City Region's innovation agenda – to be the most innovative place in the UK - is centred around partnership working and harnessing the strengths of its research, industrial and civic assets. Combined with enhancing its identity as a frontrunner in the fourth industrial revolution and embracing a confident and bold innovation culture, this will create the conditions to generate positive employment, training, and productivity outcomes at scale.
- 6.2 The plan looks to deliver 34 actions across 6 thematic areas, in partnership with national and regional partners, and across sectors. The actions are built around the overarching vision of an inclusive and sustainable economy.
- 6.3 The 6 thematic areas are:
- Ecosystem
 - Identity
 - Skills
 - Inclusive Growth
 - Investment

- Infrastructure.

6.4 The priority areas and draft actions are set out in the appendix for consideration. The draft actions sit within the wider document, which emphasises the development of the plan, the strong Glasgow City Region offer and the combined impacts of interventions by the City Region, Innovate UK and Scottish Enterprise.

7. Next Steps

7.1 The appended draft has been considered and endorsed by the Glasgow Economic Leadership Board and by the Strategic Programme Board of Glasgow City of Science and Innovation. The Regional Economic Delivery Group and the Regional Partnership have provided comment.

7.2 The intention is that the plan will subsequently be launched by the Chair of the Glasgow City Region Cabinet and the Chief Executives of Innovate UK and Scottish Enterprise at the CAN DO Innovation Summit on 7 November in Glasgow Science Centre.

7.3 The plan will be reviewed annually, and a monitoring and ongoing governance framework is being developed, which will both recognise and build on the strong partnership approach that has led to its development.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Cabinet is invited to:

- approve the draft actions in the plan; and
- note the next steps.

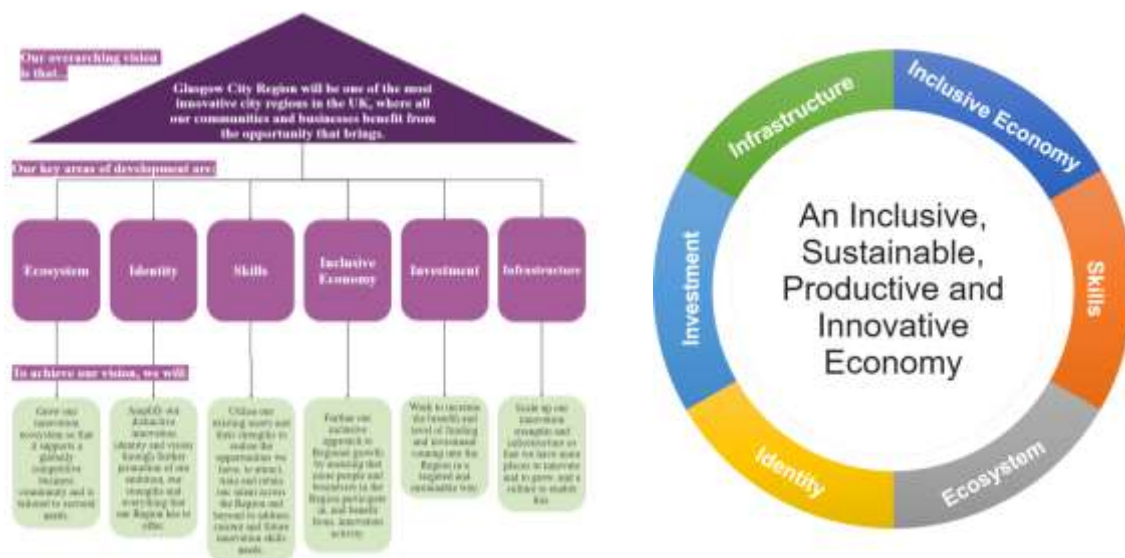
APPENDIX – DRAFT ACTIONS

In partnership, we are working to deliver our shared vision that Glasgow City Region will be one of the most innovative places in the UK, where all communities and businesses benefit from the opportunities that brings. Underpinning that vision is a commitment that the actions taken are in pursuit of an inclusive and sustainable economy.

Glasgow City Region has tremendous strengths in existing assets and a collective history of support for the innovation agenda. We will build on this to unlock greater prosperity for all who live and work in the Region.

Success will be determined by strong collaborative working across partners and sectors. It is for that reason that the Regional Planning Group has worked collectively to develop core action areas and priorities. This plan is not owned by any one institution or body, it is owned in collaboration and by those who contributed to it.

Our plan sets out 6 key areas to concentrate our efforts, and to create the enabling conditions for future prosperity: Ecosystem, Identity, Skills, Inclusive Economy, Investment and Infrastructure. Within each category, we set out several actions.



Ecosystem

Innovators are part of a thriving, vibrant, and world-leading ecosystem

Glasgow City Region has already demonstrated the strength of its connections between industry, Further and Higher Education and civic society. These connections are not incidental. They are the result of deliberate action to maximise our potential.

Peer-to-peer learning and a sense of community is key to supporting the commercialisation journey. It provides a forum to share challenges, and solutions, while working to break down perceived 'silos' between technologies, geographies or people.

We will grow our innovation ecosystem so that it supports a globally competitive business community and is tailored to sectoral needs.

To do this, we will:

- Improve the journey for businesses, by working with central Governments and external partners, to better join up the innovation support across the Region and develop a clear route-map to what is on offer.
- Grow our specialist business advisory support service and align to scaling up key Glasgow City Region market and technology sectors.
- Provide an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) education programme for all businesses that secure innovation funding.
- Enrich the mapping of the Region's innovation ecosystem to understand strengths and areas of improvement.
- Maximise the benefits of university expertise to drive spin outs, start up and knowledge transfer to existing companies by working towards a collective KT protocol/response.
- Enable more effective targeted support by ensuring all partners work together to access the right data, at the right level, at the right time.
- Regularly bring together local industry to focus on removing barriers, embracing opportunities and ensuring a strong, business-led approach to innovation and sustainable growth.

Identity

Our City Region is recognised as a world-leading place in which to live, work and innovate.

Glasgow City Region stands on its own two feet internationally. The Region was chosen to host COP26 in 2021 and the inaugural Cycling World Championships most recently in 2023 because of its international reputation. A strong emphasis on being a vibrant place and a cultural focal point continues to attract people from around the world to visit and relocate here.

Glasgow is the only city in the UK, outside of London, to have two universities ranking in the top 40 globally. Subsequently, all our universities have major global reach – attracting students from around the world. These strengths are why world-leading companies continue to seek out Glasgow and establish themselves here.

By bringing partners together, our global identity can be greater than the sum of its parts. Our innovation offer sets us apart from our competitors and reflect our successes in business and community of innovators to add further innovation and investment to our story.

We will amplify our distinctive innovation identity and vision through further promotion of our ambition, our strengths and everything that our Region has to offer.

To do this, we will:

- Align existing marketing and communication activity across the region by developing a sustained, Regional resource for marketing and promotion and a plan to 'sell' our distinctive innovation vision.
- Build upon and evolve our distinctive innovation identity by considering learnings from comparator city regions across the UK and globally.
- Build on the success of previous events by attracting and developing renowned conferences, events, and market square activity into the Region.
- Boost local confidence in our innovation prowess by creatively showcasing our innovation offer in the public realm, such as in transport hubs.
- Embed Innovation activity and success into Glasgow City Region promotion activity.

Skills

Our talent base is growing and empowered

Glasgow City Region has one of the most skilled populations in the UK and is growing at pace. We are ranked number one of the UK's core cities for the number of both students and graduates in engineering and advanced manufacturing. Over 40% of our residents are educated to degree level, the second highest across the UK's Core Cities, and the highest percentage of people in quality jobs, compared to other UK regions. A record 51% of our graduates choose to live and work in the City after graduating, and we continue to attract new talent from around the world because of our globally recognised high quality of living.

Our business partners tell us that global competition for talent is a defining feature of growth in the innovation system, and that our skill base must better match the skills that will be in demand in our emerging sectors. And we know that start-ups are a crucial component of success and driving future growth. The vibrancy and assets of Glasgow City Region represents an opportunity to both attract more talent and further nurture the skill base, especially recognising the role that our strong College offer can play in providing the technical expertise needed to unlock innovation.

We will utilise our existing assets and their strengths to realise the opportunities we have, to attract, train, and retain our talent across the Region and beyond to address current and future innovation skills needs.

To do this, we will:

- Attract and bring together top talent in key sectors through developing, for example, a 'Glasgow Innovation Fellowship', learning from the Horizon-supported Prestige Fellowships.
- Work across the ecosystem to improve the provision of skills development programmes for founders and entrepreneurs for technology and innovation start-ups.

- Develop our Innovation Skills for Growth Action Plan to tackle skills needs of existing and emerging clusters.
- Work with further and higher education institutions to ensure there is the capacity to meet the skills and training needs now and in the future, encompassing technical and academic skillsets
- Develop and implement a Regional talent attraction strategy with dedicated support to help address immediate skill gaps.

Inclusive Economy

Prosperity is shared equitably across all our communities and businesses.

Building an economy that is inclusive and sustainable is key to Glasgow City Region's work. As we reshape our economy to take advantage of the opportunities of the next industrial revolution, inclusivity and sustainability are two key principles that drive all our actions.

Different communities face unique barriers to their participation in our innovation story, and many start-ups lack the time and expertise to embed meaningful environmental and equality practices from the outset. Civic innovation practices allow diverse voices and solutions to be valued in tackling the key challenges facing Glasgow City Region, prompting further social innovation across the Region. Our work with the prestigious [Bloomberg Foundation](#) demonstrates the value and opportunity of ensuring that all communities are empowered to participate in our innovation economy.

Addressing these imbalances will allow all our communities to flourish. Throughout our innovation mission, **we will further our inclusive approach to regional growth by ensuring that more people and businesses in the Region participate in, and benefit from, innovation activity.**

To do this, we will:

- Develop our network of Enterprise Hubs in underserved areas across the Region to support entrepreneurship education for underrepresented communities.
- Create a Regional testbed for the adoption and diffusion of new technologies within businesses to improve productivity.
- Engage directly with underserved communities, to better understand and overcome the systemic barriers they face when developing entrepreneurship and enterprise.
- Empower our diverse communities through further co-design opportunities within our innovation activity and scaling our civic innovation approach.
- Ensure all geographies across the Region are connected to, benefit from and add value to our innovation activity.
- Establish the Region as a test bed for social innovation and encourage greater participation in the innovation economy

Investment

Greater funding and investment is attracted to the Region by our strong innovation offer

Glasgow City Region frequently attracts global investment, with foreign direct investment (FDI) into the region being amongst the highest in the UK. We are among the top three fastest-growing tech investment hubs in the UK, and have been repeatedly bolstered by Government investment, including the most recent £33m Innovation Accelerator programme.

By co-ordinating our efforts at a regional level, we can better support business investment needs, ensure that companies do not fall through the gaps, and secure sustained and diverse sources of funding.

We will work to increase the breadth and level of funding and investment coming into the Region in a targeted and sustainable way.

To do this, we will:

- Develop an investor roadmap to steer investment opportunities and maximise the impact of that investment for early-stage companies, scale up activities and innovation infrastructure.
- Evaluate current capital sources and funding to identify gaps and where investment can be best targeted.
- Ensure that industry sectors are supported through further infrastructure investment and development, and actively explore the potential and opportunities of business cases.
- Create a clear and persuasive 'pitch book' for potential investors into the Region.
- Explore the opportunities that come with our Investment Zone status to direct investment and innovation activity towards the development of underutilised land.
- Build pitch training into our business support offer.

Infrastructure

Our vibrant places nurture and drive innovation

Glasgow's 'innovation corridor' arrayed along the banks of the River Clyde represents an innovation platform that is of Scottish, UK and international significance. Our national and international connectivity, as well as our status as a UK digital infrastructure leader, means that we have strong foundations to support further growth and investment. Glasgow City Region continues to attract attention and investment to support our innovation infrastructure, with a pipeline of new development to meet growing demand.

Our infrastructure must act as a catalyst for growth, addressing the spatial and demographic imbalances we see, *and* match the scale of our ambitions. We will actively foster a culture of creativity and experimentation, that is tolerant of risk, to support the businesses and innovators in the journey to commercialisation.

We will scale up our innovation strengths and infrastructure so that we have more places to innovate and to grow, and a culture to enable this.

To do this, we will:

- Map out and identify the innovation infrastructure needed to develop the Region's existing and emerging sectors to ensure places to innovate and scale up.
- Maximise the potential and expand the reach of the existing Innovation Districts to build on cross-sectoral growth opportunities.
- Work, particularly with public and private sector partners, to map the availability, affordability, and demand of workspaces to ensure they meet the needs of existing entrepreneurs and innovators in our emerging sectors.
- Inspire and cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship across tertiary education institutions by fostering a network of [Entrepreneurial Campuses](#).
- Develop and implement a joint campaign across the Region which promotes a supportive environment for confident risk-taking, in partnership with the private sector.