

Glasgow's International Strategy: 2025 - 2030



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Leader's Foreword

To be added.

Councillor Susan Aitken
Leader, Glasgow City Council

Executive Summary

We know that international activity is of significant value to Glasgow and its citizens. We want to harness the energy and capacity of our partners, to ensure that international activity works for the benefit of all Glaswegians. To do that, we have set out our international strategy.

Our mission is that:

We will work as Team Glasgow and create the conditions for Glasgow to thrive as a global city.

Our pillars of delivery are:



Our cross-cutting themes are:



Our vision is for:



1. Introduction

This is Glasgow's international strategy. It sets out priorities for the city in connecting with the rest of the world.

The strategy looks to do three main things:

- I. Acknowledge Glasgow's role as a place that has been connecting with the rest of the world in various ways for a very long time.
- II. Build on those links so that Glaswegian businesses and communities can benefit from them.
- III. Chart a course for future progress and prosperity through Glasgow's engagement with people and the global marketplace.

In 2025 Glasgow celebrates our 850th anniversary as we mark the moment when our home received formal Burgh Status. And with the prospect of Glasgow hosting a reimagined Commonwealth Games in 2026, now is therefore a good time to reflect on our city's position and reputation in the world. We are an internationalist and a global city, and always have been. This strategy sets out how we will build on our strengths as a highly skilled, welcoming and inclusive place, no matter your background.

We are immensely proud of our city, and all that it has created. We want all our citizens to share that deep sense of pride in our collective accomplishments. Glasgow is a place with enormous global reach. But we do not rest on our laurels. We can be more. Through our international work, we want all Glaswegians to continue to take pride in the city that they call home.

Our vision is that Glasgow continues to flourish on the international stage. Our comparator cities have developed international strategies. We have looked at them and sought to learn from them. Some of Glasgow's own institutions have also described their own global connections and stated their ambitions. The city works best when it works together, and this strategy sets out practical ways of making a highly collaborative approach to our international role both effective and successful.

From our earliest days, Glasgow has been closely integrated with the rest of the world. Our story as small settlements built around the River Clyde and Glasgow Cathedral, that became home to one of the world's oldest universities and built an unrivalled shipping and maritime industry, only happened because of our links around the world. Links forged from our academic and economic abilities, enhanced and grown by our artistic and cultural excellence which continues to inspire to this day.

Glasgow today is a world-leader in many respects. It stands in stark contrast to the city of 50 years ago. Our economy has transformed dramatically, though we retain our focus on engineering excellence. We have actively supported and cultivated a strong innovation ecosystem, creating the goods, services and techniques that will transform the world economy.

In many ways, Glasgow's transformation and regeneration has been Culture-led. Using significant cultural events as a catalyst for change has resulted in a dramatic growth in leisure and business tourism, contributing to and strengthening the city's economy.

Our population is growing. Driven by more diverse and younger groups choosing to make the city their home through inward migration. These new Glaswegians are a cause of celebration, and Glasgow remains a place where diversity is embraced as our strength.

But we know that we can do more and be more. It is for that reason that we have worked with partners to develop our International Strategy. It seeks to bring together the strands of our

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many partners and to articulate how we will work together to grow the prosperity of our city and its communities.

This is a statement of the opportunities that we believe Glasgow would benefit from, and how we will work to realise them. Whilst this document will comprise the first International Strategy for the Council in many years, it has not been created from scratch, or in isolation. It brings together, and complements, the city's work to date. It is a further expression of the commitment in the Council's strategic plan to a fair and sustainable city where everyone gets to contribute, and all can benefit from a flourishing Glasgow.

In the following pages, we will: set out our vision; demonstrate in which ways a focused international agenda is required to support the delivery of our strategic commitments; explain how we will deliver and govern this strategy; and present the specific steps that we will take.

2. Strategic Context and Vision

A city that flourishes on the international stage.

We are committed to building the most productive, most resilient and most sustainable City Region economy in the UK by 2030. Guiding our international activity is crucial to delivering on those missions. By the nature of our economy, our people and our heritage, we are already an international city. We now seek to shape and harness that engagement for the benefit of all those who live and work here.

Glasgow has a number of strategies, all of which contain international elements, including:

- [Glasgow Economic Strategy 2022 – 2030](#);
- [Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy](#);
- [Glasgow 2030 Tourism Strategy](#);
- [Glasgow's Culture Strategy 2024 - 2030](#);
- [Glasgow Investment Strategy 2023 – 2030](#);
- [Glasgow City Region Innovation Action Plan](#);
- The [Glasgow Transport Strategy](#) & the [Regional Transport Strategy for the west of Scotland 2023 – 2038](#); and
- A forthcoming Events Strategy.

This strategy does not seek to duplicate these documents. Instead, it seeks to weave together common threads, and create a mechanism that brings our partners together to deliver on those ambitions.

The Council, and its partners, are determined to speak with one voice to present the best that Glasgow has to offer, and to maximise the use of our combined resources. We know that our city, as the only truly metropolitan region in Scotland and the third largest city in the United Kingdom, has a distinctive identity. We will use that shared voice to highlight our distinctive strengths, and where they complement the assets of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

By setting out an international strategy, we join peer cities across the UK, and the globe. We are taking proactive action to continue to build on our strong international reputation with a shared recognition that guiding our international engagement is not merely an option, but a strategic necessity to drive growth, prosperity, innovation and sustainability.

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2.1 Towards the strategy

We know international engagement creates economic, social, cultural and academic opportunity. This strategy sets out to capture those benefits for the people who live and work in Glasgow. And it seeks to better connect Glasgow, its people, and the rest of the world.

This is a message from our review of international comparators, and a consistent message from the businesses that we engaged with. In developing this strategy, we have worked closely with our partners and across the Council family.

We have convened a working group comprising:

- Our five higher education institutions and representatives of our FE sector;
- The Scottish Government;
- The UK Government through colleagues in FCDO;
- UK and Scottish Government agencies, including Scottish Enterprise, SDI, Innovate UK and the Connected Places Catapult;
- Our two Innovation Districts at GCID and GRID;
- The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce; and
- Colleagues across the Council family, including Glasgow Life and the Lord Provost's Office.

We have worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce to bring together representatives of our business community. In all, we have heard directly from over 140 businesses, representing a breadth of sectors and experience of engaging internationally. We have reflected on their contribution, and their voices have directly shaped many of the actions that we set out in this document.

This strategy recognises the need for flexibility in order to respond to a continually changing global outlook. It covers the period 2025-2030 and will be underpinned by a delivery plan that will be reviewed at the mid-point of the strategy. The delivery plan will seek to draw upon the Team Glasgow approach with all of our partners. This approach will allow us to review our stated outcomes and objectives, and to take account of both emerging market opportunities and new challenges.

2.2 Economic Opportunity

Glasgow has a significant opportunity that can be realised through our international activity. By shaping and further supporting the internationalisation of our economy, we can:

- Support local business to grow and generate sustainable profits;
- create jobs for people in Glasgow;
- raise living standards,
- improve our economic resilience; and
- deliver prosperity.

This strategy sets out how we will support businesses to enhance and create trade links. It articulates how we will further attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign capital investment (FCI). We also set out the key international markets in which Glasgow companies are already engaged.

In doing all of this, we will support local companies to improve their exporting performance. As a result, we expect to see enhanced productivity, profitability and growth. We also know that strong export performers are better placed to handle shocks and stay in business.

Glasgow has set out its ambition to become one of the most innovative places in the UK, building on our strong links between academia, the public sector and industry. We have set out to do this by embracing our entrepreneurial spirit and increasing the number of start-ups and spinouts. To achieve this, we need to continue to attract investment and talent from around the world.

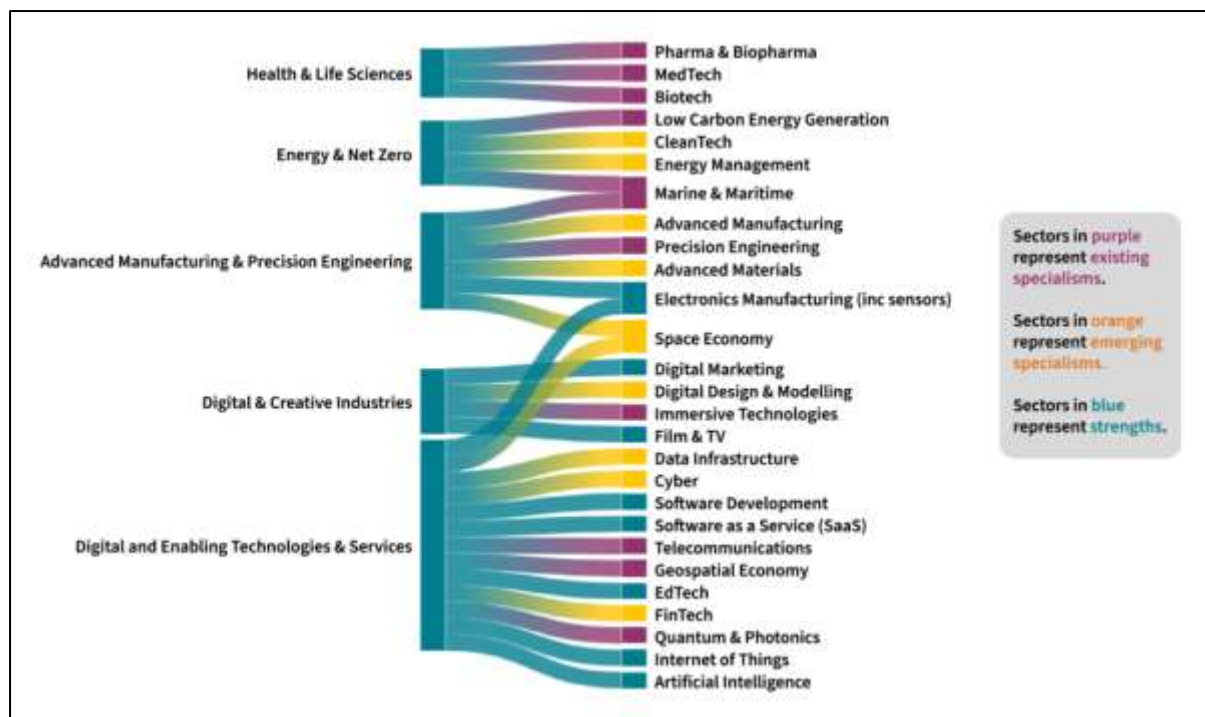
This work will complement our strong legacy of attracting international events, conferences and tourism. We know that this activity generates significant revenue for local businesses, but this strategy sets out how we will give further backing to those businesses to make their mark on the world.

Glasgow City Region, through its Intelligence Hub, has highlighted those areas of our economy where we have strength, and where we have existing and emerging specialisms. These sectors, shown in the diagram below, are at the forefront of our innovation economy. They have directly informed the Glasgow City Region Innovation Action Plan and the Glasgow City Region Investment Zone.

Food and Drink is a key addition to this list. The sector continues to be Scotland's top international export sector and includes many of the most readily identifiable Scottish products sold abroad.

Through this strategy, we will actively seek to further support these sectors, given the importance of commercialising new innovations to addressing our city's productivity challenge.

Diagram 1: Key Sector Strengths



Source: GCR Innovation Action Plan

2.3 Social Opportunity

Glasgow's diversity is a core strength, and one that we will continue to embrace and celebrate. Those who have chosen to make their home here, regardless of their background, make our city a more vibrant place. Whether they have come here through family links, seeking economic opportunity, or to learn and expand their horizons, our city is a better place for them.

In the past, an increasingly globalised economy has left too many people behind. We are determined not to repeat those mistakes, and we know that we will need to bring all our communities with us. The gains of growth are not automatically felt equally. The foundational principles of equality, diversity and inclusion underpin all of our city strategies. Achieving this is the role of the council and its partners.

And no challenge more acutely demonstrates the importance of tackling inequality than Climate Change. The city has set out its ambition to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030, laid out in the [Glasgow Climate Plan](#). That goal is ambitious, but necessary. It requires us to work locally and globally. This strategy recognises that setting and then achieving that goal gives our city a distinct place amongst the world's cities. It adds to our attractiveness for people, businesses and investors and puts us at the forefront of urban action for global sustainability goals.

Cities are on the frontline. They are the places where the effects of inequality and climate change are most acutely felt. Cities transform aspirations into concrete action, because they are closest to their citizens. Collaborative efforts between cities, and within international organisations, represents our best opportunity to meet those challenges. These serve two purposes: to work with national and international Government; and to facilitate knowledge exchange and best practice.

Glasgow has proudly participated in these networks. We have worked with other cities to accelerate our just transition to a green economy, embed climate and social resilience, and support global efforts to tackle acute crises. For these efforts, Glasgow's progress has been recognised and celebrated by our peers around the world, and we have directly improved the lives and wellbeing of our citizens.

But we know too that Glasgow must confront the complexity of its own past. This document is not the place to repeat that discussion, but in our engagements around the world, we continue to be clear that a modern, diverse and inclusive Glasgow starts with acknowledging the foundations upon which our city is, quite literally, built.

2.4 Cultural and Academic Opportunity

Glasgow's international reputation is already well developed. That is, in no small part, down to our cultural and academic assets. World-leading research and world-renowned cultural creations are often the vehicles through which meaningful city-to-city connections have been made.

These connections are valuable in their own right. They demonstrate the diversity of our city and enrich us all. Our cultural exchanges, international festivals, and twin-city and partner city agreements have fostered a more vibrant, creative, and inclusive community.

It is an approach embedded across two generations. The city's population is directly invested in our international reputation as friendly and attractive, which is successfully supported by the People Make Glasgow brand.

This cultural vibrancy not only improves the quality of life for our citizens but also makes the city more attractive to tourists and international talent, further strengthening our global appeal. Through our long-term approach and priorities, we are ensuring that perceptions of Glasgow continue to be challenged and we live up to our reputation as the "friendliest city in the World" and will remain a place that people want to experience, enjoy and return to.

The success of this can be seen in our award-winning ability to attract conferences and conventions, our growing tourist economy, and our significant international student population.

It is these connections that help us push the boundaries of our knowledge and our technology. Equipping us with the tools we need to face the challenges of the future. They add scale to our international work by helping place Glasgow on the map, and our international activity adds scale to their work.

By building deeper city-to-city connections, we align ourselves with emerging policy priorities across Europe. The UK's recent return to Horizon Europe coupled with a need to demonstrate cross-city collaboration, places us in an advantageous position to access new funding and forge new connections.

Which in turn continues to cultivate Glasgow's reputation as an exciting and attractive place to live and work. As we approach our 850th birthday, it is right that we reflect and celebrate, with pride, the great foundations on which we build, and the opportunity that awaits us in the years to come.

3. Analysis

The development of this strategy has been grounded in comprehensive qualitative analysis, involving frequent engagement with key stakeholders and thematic roundtables with the local business community. This has been strengthened through a robust quantitative analysis by the Glasgow City Region's Intelligence Hub.

3.1 Data

Recognising the challenges of obtaining specific and granular data for Glasgow, this strategy includes various actions aimed at enhancing the development of this data hub. Many of our local stakeholders possess their own valuable data sources, presenting a significant opportunity for greater collaboration and knowledge sharing. Our ambition is to integrate this diverse range of data more effectively, creating a more connected and cohesive information ecosystem. By harnessing these insights, we aim to enhance our strategic decision-making capabilities and foster a more unified and data driven approach to regional growth and development.

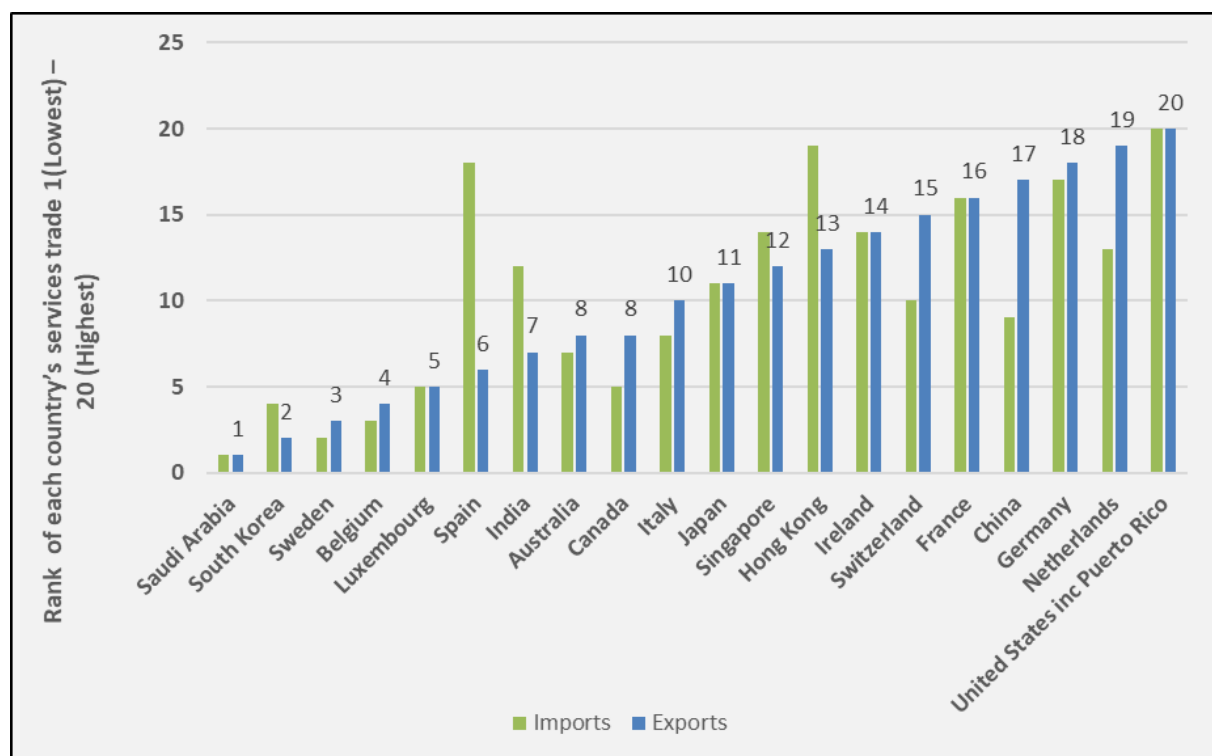
Glasgow City Region (GCR) demonstrates a resilient and adaptable trade performance, underpinned by high-value service sectors. With a total trade surplus exceeding £5million, GCR ranks as the second highest among UK Core City Regions. This substantial surplus is primarily driven by the region's strengths in Financial and Professional Services, which have consistently fuelled growth and established GCR as a leader in these specialised fields. The region's international trade is predominantly focused on services, reflecting a broader

economic transition away from traditional manufacturing industries toward a service-oriented economy. Notably, data reveals that non-EU markets play a more significant role in Glasgow's export performance than the EU, especially in the services sector. Nonetheless, exports of both goods and services to the EU remain substantial, underscoring the importance of maintaining strong relationships with these markets in the post-Brexit era.

Additionally, GCR is a notable exporter of talent. The region's universities and educational institutions attract a diverse cohort of international students, many of whom pursue global careers after graduation. This outflow of highly skilled graduates into international markets reinforces Glasgow's global reach and influence, creating a well-distributed network of professionals worldwide who maintain strong connections to the city.

Glasgow City Region's dual role as an exporter of both services and talent positions it as a significant player in the global economy. By leveraging its strengths in high-value services and its global network of skilled professionals, GCR is well-placed to drive future growth and deepen its international engagement.

Bar Chart 1: GCR's International Trading Partners 2021



Source: ONS Subnational Trade in Goods and Services

3.2 Alignment with national strategies

In addition to the strategies that sit across the Council family, we are also conscious of the strategies that govern the UK and Scottish Governments. We note that there are several with particular relevance to our international work, and we have sought to complement them through the involvement of central government at the earliest stages of development.

This strategy highlights key market areas on which to focus our resources in coming years. This approach is informed, in part, through the [Scotland: A Trading Nation](#) strategy launched in 2019, and the values set out in the [Vision for Trade](#) 2021. The actions that we set out, we believe, will assist the delivery of the Scottish Government's key outcomes, including growing exports as a percentage of GDP by 25% by 2029, maximising spillover benefits to communities and creating capital markets for key sectors including Net Zero interventions.

The Scottish Government has also presented its [International Strategy](#). In addition to articulating the economic benefit, it highlights the key role of Reputation, Influence and Relationships to drive international activity and the successful delivery of outcomes.

The UK Government has announced that it will launch a new trade strategy, however, has made clear that delivering economic growth will be core to its agenda going forward. Indeed, the government remains committed to improving the innovation and productivity outcomes. Our international activity is very much aligned with this and a key enabler of those outcomes.

3.3 Comparative analysis

Other cities, as well as institutions within Glasgow, have adopted strategies or statements on their international work and ambitions. Our strategy has therefore taken account of these.

Whilst we recognise that the institutional and governance arrangements across many of these cities differs from Glasgow, we recognise that, just as the world has much to learn from Glasgow, we can draw on their experiences. Indeed, that activity of knowledge exchange is an important element of our strategy going forward and it is right that we have reflected on it in its development.

Cities are the central nodes around which our society is organised. They are the hubs where trade, investment, innovation, research, finance and culture take place and grow. But emerging international challenges, which do not respect borders, have underlined the need for cities to engage proactively on the international stage. It is this recognition that has driven a very large number of UK cities, and many cities elsewhere in the world, to devise their own international strategies.

Similar to the process of developing Glasgow's, these strategies have largely included key stakeholders across tertiary education, innovation actors, cultural assets and city marketing officials.

Across UK cities, there is a consistent focus on investment and trade as key to supporting local economic growth and creating good, local, high-value and long-term jobs. Furthermore, in line with UK Government priorities around science, innovation and productivity, there is evidence of the very clear role in which growing exports and inward investment supports research, development and innovation, both directly and through wider spillover effects.

Across the world, these strategies contain elements of local climate and community resilience and an emphasis on delivering net-zero ambitions. These themes are strongly reflected in Glasgow's document, as a recognition of the centrality of tackling the climate emergency both through our economic activities and participation in networks.

Many other cities have committed a significant resource contribution to their international activities, both in the UK and abroad. We recognise that Glasgow cannot match that resource in the same way, which is why we have sought to articulate how we will draw upon the resource and capacity of our partners.

Chief among those resources is a recognition of our 'soft' power assets – our cultural institutions and our academic excellence. The power of these assets is particularly recognised throughout European strategies and demonstrates the power of a whole ecosystem approach. However, we believe we are more explicit in noting that our cultural institutions are equally important as economic assets.

In developing an International Strategy for Glasgow, we join many of our comparator cities. And we recognise that cities, collectively and individually, must actively shape global trends for the benefit of our citizens.

4. Delivery and Actions

In shaping this International Strategy for Glasgow, five key pillars of delivery emerged as central themes consistently highlighted by our partners.

1. Economic;
2. Education;
3. Culture & Events;
4. Networks; and
5. Civic & Communities.

These pillars are underpinned by three enabling themes:

- I. Connectivity and Infrastructure;
- II. Pride of Place; and
- III. A Single Voice.

They also relate to key areas of work which have emerged from our research on the approaches taken by other cities. While there are numerous ways in which Glasgow engages globally and delivers on its international agenda, this strategy distils them into these five core pillars.

4.1 Pillars

The following section sets out underneath each of the pillars, our key strategic outcomes and actions we will deliver over the next five years.

Our goals are ambitious, but our confidence is grounded in the strong, collaborative relationships we have built with our stakeholders. Their support and commitment to this strategy ensures we will deliver these initiatives and achieve our vision of a globally competitive and connected Glasgow City Region. Combined, this provides a focused framework for driving our international activities, ensuring that Glasgow maximises its impact and influence on the global stage.

4.1.1 Economic

We will improve and enhance Glasgow's growth, resilience and sustainability by embracing and guiding the internationalisation of our local economy.

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Through global trade, foreign direct investment and strategic partnerships, Glasgow attracts businesses, talent, and capital that drives development and innovation. This proactive approach has enabled the city to tap into new markets, build strong alliances, and enhance its competitiveness. Glasgow's success is evident as it was named Europe's top large city for attracting overseas investment this year, reflecting the strength of its investment strategy and collaborative partnerships.

Strong trade relations with key markets such as the United States, EU member states, and emerging Asian economies further position Glasgow as a significant player in the global economy. Ranking 4th among UK core cities for goods and services exports, with values of over £6million and £8million respectively, Glasgow's total exports exceed £14million, making it the 4th leading exporter among UK city regions. This highlights the city's pivotal role in driving regional economic growth through international engagement.

In this strategy, following consultation with our key stakeholders and the business community, we set what we see as our key international markets for the future. Our work over the coming years will focus on these areas and prioritise our resources in this way. These are:

- London
- Western and Central Europe
- The Eastern Seaboard of North America
- West Coast of the USA and Silicon Valley
- UAE
- Southeast Asia

To do this, we will:

- Utilise government funding programmes to implement innovative support programmes, such as International Challenge Funds, to support Glasgow businesses create meaningful relationships in areas where there is strong geographical economic synergy.
- Continue to support local businesses develop the skills, resources and networks needed for successful entry and expansion into international markets, including support for new trade missions that align with Glasgow's strategic goals in priority international markets.
- Explore the development of a Saltire Scholarship model to promote international trade and innovation, positioning Glasgow as a hub for global talent and entrepreneurship and review the Glasgow Exports model to reflect on how to better support businesses in their international trade and market expansion efforts.
- Establish a centralised data hub in collaboration with key stakeholders to share data and market intelligence, enhancing connectivity, collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making across Glasgow's international initiatives.
- Enhance the key sectoral analysis undertaken by the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub by conducting targeted research and leveraging stakeholder networks to identify and map emerging geographic markets.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of available data to benchmark Glasgow City Region's performance against other UK and Scottish cities, focusing on key industry clusters to highlight relative strengths and pinpoint areas for growth.

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4.1.2 Education

We will ensure that Glasgow's young people are empowered to take advantage of global opportunities, and that Glasgow continues to be seen as an attractive place for global talent to come study, work and live.

Glasgow is home to a robust and dynamic array of further and higher education institutions that play a crucial role in fostering global engagement, both through research collaborations and commercial ventures, while also attracting a diverse international student community. These institutions are essential to our global outreach efforts, acting as catalysts for cross-cultural understanding, the exchange of knowledge, and international cooperation. Glasgow's educational landscape has significantly advanced in building a multi-cultural environment for students and staff, preparing them to navigate complex global political and social contexts, and in forming strategic international partnerships in research, education, and business.

The key incentive for cultivating deep, enduring international partnerships based on sustained academic collaboration lies in the immense benefits of jointly addressing the world's most urgent challenges. Strategic alliances and the collective expertise of leading global universities are fundamental to achieving our international goals, particularly in relation to urban sustainability and the net zero agenda. Collaboration with external organisations stimulates innovation, opening new pathways for research, enhancing the relevance of educational content to future careers, refining teaching methodologies, and securing additional funding. Our international initiatives encompass a wide spectrum, including educational collaborations, curriculum development initiatives, and exchanges of staff, students, and ideas, all aimed at fostering a globally connected and vibrant academic community.

To do this, we will:

- Work with our FE and HE institutions to activate their extensive alumni networks and Global Ambassadors to attract further investment, tourism and opportunity into the city.
- Leverage insights from international cities to support young people in developing skills and fostering cross-cultural connections.
- Utilise networks to enhance access and fully capitalise on opportunities provided by initiatives like the Turing Scheme to support educational and cultural exchanges.
- Through our Innovation Districts, seek international innovation collaborations that complement our key priority sectors.

4.1.3 Culture and Events

We will ensure that, by bringing Glasgow's personality to life, we enhance the city's global reputation as a place that people want to experience, enjoy and return to.

In our recent history, we have provided the stage for some unforgettable occasions, drawing on a range of strengths that contribute to its success. The global attention Glasgow gets from hosting Banksy's first exhibition in more than a decade, the UCI Cycling World Championships and the Burrell achieving the prestigious Art Fund 'Museum of the Year' award, reinforces the image of modern Glasgow as a vibrant, inclusive and innovative city. It is this legacy that has

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given the organisers of the Commonwealth Games the confidence that Glasgow will be a place where their plans for a reimagined Commonwealth Games can flourish.

These events not only boost the city's economy but also align with its strategic policy ambitions, reinforcing Glasgow's identity on the world stage. They ensure that perceptions of Glasgow continue to be challenged and we live up to our reputation as the "friendliest city in the world". Our events reputation serves as a platform for positive social impact, attracting a wide range of visitors and raising international awareness of Glasgow's dynamic cultural landscape.

Glasgow is home to four of the five national performing arts companies in Scotland and was named the UK's top Cultural and Creative City by the European Commission in 2019. Our civic collection of art and cultural items is one of the finest in the world, and in recent years art from that collection has been shown in Paris, New York, the Vatican, the Netherlands and Japan, to name a few.

The city has recently focused its marketing activities on a new Visit Glasgow approach. Through cultural exchanges, festivals, and conferences, the city complements national promotion and showcases its distinct identity and heritage.

Such activities create opportunities for the exchange of ideas, building partnerships, and fostering collaboration across sectors like trade, education, and policy. In this way, Glasgow enhances its global influence and contributes to a more inter-connected and inclusive international community.

To do this, we will:

- Create a cohesive branding strategy that amplifies Glasgow's unique identity, reinforcing its distinct position on both national and international stages.
- Work with Glasgow Airport and work with national Government to ensure there is fair support for the development of new flight routes that align with our strategic markets.
- Engage strategically, through existing Regional structures, with the Scottish and UK Governments to shape policies related to visas, funding and the creative economy, fostering a supportive environment for Glasgow's international growth.
- Deliver the actions set out in the Tourism Action Plan, led by Glasgow Life, which supports the Glasgow 2030 Tourism Strategy.
- Realise the bold ambitions presented in the city's Culture Strategy, and its associated forthcoming action plan, focused around cultural profile, cultural participation, skills and sustainability.
- Attract, develop and deliver an international events portfolio that provides a platform to showcase Glasgow in key international markets and sectors, positioning the city as a world-leading, innovative events destination and a vibrant place to visit, live, work and do business with.
- Align support across the Council and partners to maximise inward investment opportunities, strategic partnerships and business development, particularly drawing upon the city's world-leading civic, cultural and events reputation.

4.1.4 Networks

We will ensure that Glasgow's voice is heard loudly and clearly, as a global leader, by leveraging our networks for the benefit of everyone who lives and works here.

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Glasgow's active involvement in international networks is pivotal to advancing the city's global ambitions and leveraging opportunities for growth and collaboration. By prioritising engagement in global networks and partnerships, Glasgow has established a strong international reputation. These networks are crucial for building strategic alliances, expanding influence beyond national boundaries, and fostering collaboration on innovative solutions, policy development, and shared learning. They also enhance the city's ability to adapt to global trends, advocate in international forums, and address urban challenges collectively.

The Council, along with the broader Council family, is formally involved in over 24 international networks, with numerous other city organisations participating in even more. This extensive network engagement enables information sharing, best practice exchange, and collaboration, significantly boosting Glasgow's profile. High-profile memberships in these networks provide valuable opportunities for technical networking, learning, and policy development, reinforcing the city's reputation on the global stage.

Glasgow also benefits from strong ties with leading international Higher Education institutions through these networks, creating opportunities for staff, students, global alumni, and industry partners, and supporting broader internationalisation efforts. By deepening these international partnerships, Glasgow aims to strengthen its global position, influence, and capacity for impactful collaboration.

To do this, we will:

- Create a Global Glaswegians network and establish an Ambassadors Network to promote Glasgow, attract investment and build strategic partnerships.
- Work with partners to prioritise Glasgow's participation and representation at strategically important network events, specifically COP, Global Expo's, New York Tartan Week and other trade fairs, both at home and abroad.
- Through collaboration with key London agencies, create the conditions for the city, and its partners, to maximise the opportunities presented by one of the largest global economic hubs, on our doorstep.
- Align resources across partners' international activities to ensure effective collaboration and maximise the benefits for Glasgow.
- Host an annual forum to bring together partners and the business community to review progress on our international ambitions.

4.1.5 Civic and Communities

We will ensure that our international activity benefits all our communities, and that we maximise the benefits of our civic 'soft' power.

Glasgow's civic soft power is a crucial element of our international strategy, enabling us to influence and attract through our cultural assets, values, and social capital. This is demonstrated through cultural diplomacy, public engagement, and international partnerships that foster dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. By leveraging our unique cultural identity, vibrant civic society, educational institutions, and community-driven initiatives, we strengthen international relationships, enhance our global reputation, and promote mutual

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respect. This soft power approach not only amplifies Glasgow's influence on the global stage but also supports sustainable international cooperation and development.

The Lord Provost's office plays a vital ambassadorial role for Glasgow, hosting numerous civic events and engagements each year and leading an international relations programme that promotes the city globally. This includes fostering Commonwealth and international development efforts and maintaining productive twin city relationships, which significantly contribute to global networking and collaboration.

To do this, we will:

- Align support across the Council and partners to maximise inward investment opportunities, particularly utilising the city's world-leading civic and cultural assets.
- Deepen and enhance our city-to-city connections, based on a strategic methodology to identify synergies and ensure a meaningful contribution to the wellbeing of Glaswegians.
- Foster active engagement from local communities and organisations in global outreach efforts, ensuring a cohesive and inclusive approach to international engagement – focusing initially on the engagement opportunities offered by the Glasgow 850 celebrations.
- Utilise our leadership role in the Eurocities Network to further advance social affairs aligned with the needs of our citizens.
- Through the FCDO's Centre of Expertise in Green Cities and Infrastructure, we will respond to the impacts of climate change and poverty by supporting the delivery of sustainable cities and resilient infrastructure, drawing on the skills and capabilities of Glasgow businesses to support emerging cities in developing countries.

4.2 Enabling Themes

These five pillars of delivery are underpinned by cross-cutting, enabling themes. These are:

- Connectivity and Infrastructure;
- Pride of Place; and
- A Single Voice.

They stem from our recognition that the pillars cannot be treated in isolation and that the delivery of our outcomes requires a whole system approach.

4.2.1 Connectivity and Infrastructure

Glasgow is well connected to the world, but continued success means that we need to enhance that connectivity. We understand that our ambitions to improve trade, exports and cultural connections will require improving our physical connectivity to international destinations. However, we also recognise that people-to-people networks are the driving force to achieving lasting change. Through this theme, we recognise our need to nurture and enhance those networks both externally and internally to the city.

4.2.2 Pride of Place

We are immensely proud of our city and its people.

That is something we have sought to reflect in how we talk about ourselves, and for which we continue to receive accolades. From Glasgow Smiles Better in the 1980s to its current city brand People Make Glasgow, Glasgow's place marketing has been award-winning. People Make Glasgow is credited with galvanising and articulating the friendliness and people-focused ethos of the city which has been voted the world's friendliest city more than once, and recent survey evidence demonstrates that it still captures the overriding sentiment of the city.

We celebrate the city's 850th anniversary next year. In so doing, we want all our people to be able to recognise and share all that makes this a unique and lasting place to live, work and do business. Through our engagement with stakeholders, we understand the importance of the physical place offer, being enhanced through our City Deal investment and core Council initiatives. And we also reflect on a common belief that Glasgow's many strengths can be more forcefully articulated. We are at the forefront of a new industrial revolution, a city recognised for our cultural offer and our quality of life. Glasgow is at the cutting edge, and we want to embrace that future with confidence, optimism, and Glaswegian bravado.

4.2.3 A single voice

Our city works best when it works together. We have immense talent, skills and creativity, within our communities and across our institutions. We seek to harness and amplify that, by speaking a single message with a single voice. Our international activity is mutually beneficial, our diversity is a strength, our offer is unique. By uniting our efforts, we will unlock the potential to accomplish far more than we could individually.

The action plan supporting this strategy sets out plans for developing a compelling single voice for the city delivered by partnership working across the strategic pillars.

5. Governance

This strategy sets out our vision for international activity, the enabling themes and the actions which we're going to take to realise that vision.

The world is constantly changing. As new markets emerge and new challenges arise, the strategy will need to evolve and react. The kind of flexibility and responsiveness which we need to address such change will draw on the same strong Team Glasgow approach set out in this strategy for delivering on it.

Primarily, on-going governance of the strategy will sit with Glasgow Economic Leadership (GEL). This will build on the model that oversees regional innovation activity and will include public and private sector representatives. We anticipate that this GEL International sub-group will:

- Lead on the overall assessment of progress;
- Support partners to develop indicators for the delivery of specific actions and outcome measures for their impact; and
- Ensure responsiveness to global change in market conditions and existing and new links to other cities and nations.

The strategy will be underpinned by a two-year delivery plan. This will identify lead partners for each of the five pillars ensure co-ordination of actions both under and across them. They

will be responsible for submitting detail on progress and the Council's Economic Development service will collate overall reporting on the strategy.

6. Measuring Outcomes

Our International Strategy supports and enhances the interests of all those who live and work here. The actions that we have set out above will, combined, transform the city's international engagement. However, we are clear that reporting against these actions, in isolation, will not deliver the change we wish to see.

Reporting on the strategy will go to the GEL Board on a regular basis and to a Council committee with an annual update. To that end, in the delivery plan stage, we will set out a suite of outcome measures by which we will judge the success of this strategy. A comprehensive suite of outcomes and associated baseline data will take further work to develop. This will also complement the reporting of wider outcomes across the Council family. In particular, the [Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy](#) sets out a number of outcome indicators over three grand challenges of Inclusive Economy, Enhancing Productivity and Climate Emergency.

We understand that our international activities will support the improvement of many of those indicators. However, for the purposes of supporting the International Strategy, we anticipate the following outcomes may be assessed:

- Higher employment and further job creation in high growth sectors;
- Export performance compared to current levels, including an increased number of businesses, and in particular SMEs, being export active;
- Attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), including the continued growth of FDI projects;
- Glasgow is perceived positively as a destination for tourism and investment, and recognised as a leader by other cities globally;
- Our participation in International Networks supports access to new funding opportunities and supports the development of national and international policy positions that benefit the people of Glasgow;
- Our ability to attract and retain International talent to Glasgow is recognised; and
- We make better use of the international diaspora of Glaswegians, and our alumni networks, to support FDI/FCI or market access opportunities.

The full suite of measures, and their integration into the wider outcome indicator reporting, will be fully developed during the creation of the delivery plan.

Appendix 1: International Networks and Partnerships

The list below outlines the International Networks of which Glasgow City Council is currently a member.

- C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (Associate Member)
- Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance
- Cities4Forests Initiative
- Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance
- Cities for Digital Rights
- City DNA
- Connected Places Catapult
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation
- Eurocities
- EU Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt
- European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities
- European Waterfront Cities Network
- Global Parliament of Mayors
- Global Resilient Cities Network
- ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability
- ICLEI Cities with Nature
- ICLEI Urban Transitions Alliance
- Ideas and Knowledge Exchange Network (iKEN)
- Inclusive Cities Network
- Institute of Global Homelessness: A Place to Call Home Initiative
- International Congress and Convention Association
- Lighting Urban Community International Association
- MetroLab Network
- OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth
- Open Government Partnership
- POLIS Network
- The Carter Center
- UK Core Cities Network
- UN Economic Commission for Europe

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- UNESCO Creative Cities Network (City of Music)
- UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities
- URBACT ROOF Network
- World Economic Forum: Sustainable Mass Timber Working Group
- World Health Organisation Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities

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Appendix 2: Glasgow's Twin Cities

[Nuremberg, Germany](#)

Twinning agreement signed - 1985

[Dalian, China](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 1997

[Havana, Cuba](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2002

[Turin, Italy](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2003

[Marseilles, France](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2006

[Lahore, Pakistan](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2006

[Bethlehem, Palestine](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2007

[Mykolaiv, Ukraine](#)

Twinning Agreement signed - 2024

Appendix 3: Membership of the International Strategy Working Group

We wish to reiterate our thanks to those who participated and engaged in the work of the International Strategy Working Group, representing the following organisations and Government departments:

Central Government

- Directorate for International Trade and Investment (Scottish Government)
- Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (UK Government)

Education Institutions

- Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board
- Glasgow School of Art
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- University of Glasgow
- University of Strathclyde

Government Agencies

- Innovate UK
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Development International
- The Connected Places Catapult

Innovation Districts

- Glasgow City Innovation District
- Glasgow Riverside Innovation District

Private Sector:

- Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

The Glasgow City Council Family:

- The Lord Provost's Office
- Council Leader's Office
- Economic Development
- Glasgow Life
- Education Services
- Glasgow 850
- Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub

Appendix 4: List of Actions

Economic

- Utilise government funding programmes to implement innovative support programmes, such as International Challenge Funds, to support Glasgow businesses create meaningful relationships in areas where there is strong geographical economic synergy.
- Continue to support local businesses develop the skills, resources and networks needed for successful entry and expansion into international markets, including support for new trade missions that align with Glasgow's strategic goals in priority international markets.
- Explore the development of a Saltire Scholarship model to promote international trade and innovation, positioning Glasgow as a hub for global talent and entrepreneurship and review the Glasgow Exports model to reflect on how to better support businesses in their international trade and market expansion efforts.
- Establish a centralised data hub in collaboration with key stakeholders to share data and market intelligence, enhancing connectivity, collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making across Glasgow's international initiatives.
- Enhance the key sectoral analysis undertaken by the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub by conducting targeted research and leveraging stakeholder networks to identify and map emerging geographic markets.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of available data to benchmark Glasgow City Region's performance against other UK and Scottish cities, focusing on key industry clusters to highlight relative strengths and pinpoint areas for growth.

Education

- Work with our FE and HE institutions to activate their extensive alumni networks and Global Ambassadors to attract further investment, tourism and opportunity into the city.
- Leverage insights from international cities to support young people in developing skills and fostering cross-cultural connections.
- Utilise networks to enhance access and fully capitalise on opportunities provided by initiatives like the Turing Scheme to support educational and cultural exchanges.
- Through our Innovation Districts, seek international innovation collaborations that complement our key priority sectors.

Culture and Events

- Create a cohesive branding strategy that amplifies Glasgow's unique identity, reinforcing its distinct position on both national and international stages.
- Work with Glasgow Airport and work with national Government to ensure there is fair support to grow our strategic markets.
- Engage strategically, through existing Regional structures, with the Scottish and UK Governments to shape policies related to visas, funding and the creative economy, fostering a supportive environment for Glasgow's international growth.
- Deliver the actions set out in the Tourism Action Plan, led by Glasgow Life, which supports the Glasgow 2030 Tourism Strategy.
- Realise the bold ambitions presented in the city's Culture Strategy, and its associated forthcoming action plan, focused around cultural profile, cultural participation, skills and sustainability.

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- Attract, develop and deliver an international events portfolio that provides a platform to showcase Glasgow in key international markets and sectors, positioning the city as a world-leading, innovative events destination and a vibrant place to visit, live, work and do business with.
- Align support across the Council and partners to maximise inward investment opportunities, strategic partnerships and business development, particularly drawing upon the city's world-leading civic, cultural and events reputation.

Networks

- Create a Global Glaswegians network and establish an Ambassadors Network to promote Glasgow, attract investment and build strategic partnerships.
- Work with partners to prioritise Glasgow's participation and representation at strategically important network events, specifically COP, Global Expo's, New York Tartan Week and other trade fairs, both at home and abroad.
- Through collaboration with key London agencies, create the conditions for the city, and its partners, to maximise the opportunities presented by one of the largest global economic hubs, on our doorstep.
- Align resources across partners' international activities to ensure effective collaboration and maximise the benefits for Glasgow.
- Host an annual forum to bring together partners and the business community to review progress on our international ambitions.

Civic and Communities

- Align support across the Council and partners to maximise inward investment opportunities, particularly utilising the city's world-leading civic and cultural assets.
- Deepen and enhance our city-to-city connections, based on a strategic methodology to identify synergies and ensure a meaningful contribution to the wellbeing of Glaswegians.
- Foster active engagement from local communities and organisations in global outreach efforts, ensuring a cohesive and inclusive approach to international engagement – focusing initially on the engagement opportunities offered by the Glasgow 850 celebrations.
- Utilise our leadership role in the Eurocities Network to further advance social affairs aligned with the needs of our citizens.
- Through the FCDO's Centre of Expertise in Green Cities and Infrastructure, we will respond to the impacts of climate change and poverty by supporting the delivery of sustainable cities and resilient infrastructure, drawing on the skills and capabilities of Glasgow businesses to support emerging cities in developing countries.

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