



**Glasgow City Council**

**City Administration Committee**

**Report by Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of the Council and  
City Convener for City and City Region Economy and Just  
Transition**

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**Item 3**

**7th November 2024**

**International Strategy: 2025 - 2030**

**Purpose of Report:**

To present City Administration Committee with, and seek approval for, a new International Strategy for Glasgow.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report including the proposed next steps; and
- Approve the attached International Strategy 2025 – 2030 for the city.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

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

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Glasgow is an internationalist and outward-looking city with a long history of engagement with the rest of the world. This has encompassed trade in both goods and ideas, the movement of people from and to the city, as well as cultural and educational connections.
- 1.2 The Council has played its own leading role in building these relationships, whilst acknowledging its place as one amongst a range of partners in promoting such links. These latter have particularly included the business community, practitioners from the arts, cultural and sporting communities, as well as the many and diverse family and friendship connections between Glasgow and the world.
- 1.3 In this light, the city's [Economic Strategy](#) makes a specific commitment to the development of a new international strategy for Glasgow. The city itself has not had such a strategy for some while, although some of its principal institutions (such as the universities) have produced versions for their own use. In recent years, Glasgow has built a strong global reputation through its hosting of major events such as COP26 and the UCI World Championships and the links to other cities, markets and peoples around the world which they have brought. At the same time, the changing nature of the city's economy and demography vividly illustrates how open Glasgow is to the world – from new export-focused innovation sectors to an increasingly diverse and young population, many of whom are new Glaswegians. The time is therefore right to take stock of this experience, to draw together existing work and to set out a key set of actions around which city partners can coalesce.
- 1.4 This report presents a new draft international strategy for consideration by members of the Committee. It also looks to support the Glasgow 850 celebrations next year and the opportunities which that brings to put the city back in the global spotlight and to reach out both to the diaspora community of Glaswegians overseas and those many people who will have studied, worked and lived in Glasgow before returning to their places of national origin and who have done so with a strong sense of affiliation for this city.
- 1.5 Members are asked to note that the International Strategy was presented to the Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee on 1st October 2024 and thereafter referred to this Committee for approval. In addition, following consideration by EHTR, there was a subsequent briefing to the Glasgow Economic Leadership Board on 8th October 2024 for their consideration and input into next steps.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 A number of other cities in the UK and around the world have published statements and strategies to guide their work on international connections. These often have a strong focus on business growth through export trade and investment, but equally they recognise that cultural and educational links are the 'soft power' assets that cities can mobilise in connecting with markets and

building relationships abroad. Some of them also work with an explicit understanding of the role of 'city diplomacy' in leading their own efforts to promote their city and engagement in global policy discussion on key areas such as climate action and social justice. They crucially build too on the distinctly urban dimension of action on such issues, which can often lead on and drive ahead of national ambitions.

2.2 A review of these approaches has been undertaken in order to inform the development of Glasgow's new International Strategy. It has included a focus on connectivity and how well Glasgow is linked to other places via its airport and within the wider city-region itself. This work has helped to shape the proposed main pillars of the strategy and also to give a sense of where Glasgow currently stands in relation to those other cities - which are both peers and competitors in a global context.

2.3 Alongside this has been an assessment of existing policies in the city which have a clear international element. These include recent policy developments which have been adopted by the city in the past year or so, such as:

- [Glasgow Economic Strategy 2022 – 2030](#);
- [Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy](#);
- [Glasgow 2030 Tourism Strategy](#);
- [Glasgow 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
- [Glasgow Events Strategy](#).

Work on the above has already drawn upon a range of activities to gauge stakeholder views across both agencies and residents. The new International Strategy has been able to benefit from the information which such work has generated and use it to inform the key actions which are stated in the appended draft document.

2.4 Key city partners have also come together as a working group to provide their own views and share their experience. This group has included Glasgow's further and higher education sectors, for instance, as well as the participation of both the UK and Scottish Governments and their agencies, such as SDI. It has also had key representation from the business community through the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. This ensures that the appended strategy already has a high degree of credibility with partners, a sense of collective preparedness from them to deliver on its actions, and a platform for progress in discussion with the two national governments.

2.5 As noted, a number of partner institutions in the city have already developed their own approaches to the opportunities of engaging with the rest of the world. Foremost amongst these are the further and higher education sector and the business community, which bring with them some of the most developed and longstanding relationships with other cities and nations which Glasgow can look

to harness and enhance. These policies and the activities around them have also been reviewed for the new International Strategy and many of these institutions have been represented on the working group which has proposed the actions in it. They offer a good basis on which to build, but illustrate too the need to articulate a clearer and more joined up business narrative for the city.

- 2.6 Complementing the rich sources of data and opinion which these plans present, specific work to support the International Strategy's development has also been commissioned in order to provide further detail and direction from key stakeholders. A series of roundtable discussions was convened through the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce to provide a voice for business - with more than 100 local companies and representatives from the further and higher education sectors participating in them. These have generated an additional set of insights into the challenges and opportunities around the city's international reach. They have also allowed the extensive market intelligence which the city's businesses already possess to be gathered into the strategy, together with detail on the specific national sources of investment into the city and sources of people connections, particularly through incoming students.
- 2.7 In addition to the above, this strategy is underpinned by analysis conducted by the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub. This robust quantitative analysis demonstrates Glasgow's key strengths relative to other core cities across the UK, including noting that the City Region ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> across UK Core City Regions with a £5billion trade surplus. This analysis has now been published on the Glasgow City Region website, and is available to [view here](#).

### **3 Key pillars and actions**

- 3.1 The work described above has been assessed and interpreted by partners as a key resource for aiding the drafting of the appended strategy. It has led to the development of five key pillars for this strategy, which are:
- Culture and Events - looking at the wide and deep role of culture and the arts, as significant economic sector and its contribution to the strong place offer and reputation which Glasgow presents to the world. This pillar also looks to maximise benefits from hosting major events in Glasgow and guide its future participation in global marketplace activities, which can potentially foreground and promote the city and particular sectors.
  - Economic – placing the new strategy clearly within the context of trade and investment links and the importance of growing local businesses and jobs.
  - Education – drawing on both the strong attractor power of the further and higher education sector for overseas connections as well as the city's schools and young people.
  - Civic and Communities - recognising the key role of the city's traditional city twinning links, the formal role of Glasgow's Lord Provost in welcoming the world to Glasgow and representing the city to the world, and the centrality of Glasgow's communities to this work
  - Networks – seeing the impact and learning which Glasgow's diverse links to other urban collaborations around the world can contribute to its international positioning.

3.2 These pillars of delivery are underpinned by three enabling themes. recognising that successful delivery of the strategy requires a whole system approach. These themes are:

- Connectivity and Infrastructure – noting that the fulfilment of our ambitions will require improved physical connectivity on an international scale, and also recognising the importance of nurturing people-to-people networks.
- Pride of Place – we are proud of our city and all that it has achieved. This theme particularly responds to a strong feeling across stakeholders that Glasgow's strengths can be more forcefully articulated and that Glasgow's offer, as a place, continues to rival leading cities both in the UK and abroad.
- A single voice – particularly recognising that the city can do more to bring together a strong set of messages and partner action to tell a Glasgow story to the world – one which supports trade, encourages investment, and leads to more people wanting to come to the city.

3.3 A series of key actions have been agreed under each of the five pillars. These actions bring together a collective city approach to the way in which Glasgow works with the world, exports to it, and draws on people-to-people links. They aim to ensure that work for each of the pillars connects across and builds on the others.

3.4 The strategy places a great deal of emphasis on Glasgow's existing profile and utilising the available levers to bolster that profile. There are, for instance, clear links between the forging of cultural and educational bonds with other places overseas – which have intrinsic merit in themselves – and the subsequent progression of trade and investment opportunities arising from them. The same can be said for Glasgow's participation and presence in international networks and events, which often act as a starting point for much deeper strategic partnerships that can, ultimately, benefit the wellbeing of Glasgow's citizens. For example, the ability of the city to continue to attract big events and conferences rests on the strong profile, track record and assets – both physical and reputational – which the city can promote to the world through its existing network of global city links and in-country business connections.

3.5 Some of the actions will require funding and some will need the policy support of Glasgow's two national governments and their agencies. There is, for instance, a focus on how future overseas trade missions can be supported in order to project the city to international markets and investors – for which any further round of UK Shared Prosperity Funds from 2025/6 could be a potential resource. Similarly, the continuing need for local companies and the education sector to attract skilled workers and new students from overseas will require policy alignment from national government on visa and residence issues.

## **4 Next steps**

4.1 The attached strategy will help to guide the city's progress in and around the world over the period to 2030. It also looks to support the development of other local plans, to aid delivery of their international aims where they feature, and to bring an international dimension to other policy discussions.

- 4.2 Should Committee approve the appended strategy, it is intended to bring stakeholders together once more and develop a more detailed delivery plan, including appropriate outcome measurement. This will be reviewed at the mid-point and allow us to review our stated outcomes and objectives, and to take account of emerging market opportunities and new challenges.
- 4.3 The new strategy is intended to provide a strong and clear sense of international positioning for Glasgow as it commemorates its 850th anniversary in 2025. Further work will therefore take place over the year itself to enrich the strategy with the voices of local communities in relation to their own ambitions for linking to the world, drawing too on the Glaswegian diaspora and how its members can play their part in supporting a global Glasgow from their own current homes elsewhere around the world.
- 4.4 Should the strategy be endorsed by the Council then work will be undertaken on the design and graphics of the appended text to produce a public document which can then be published.
- 4.5 On-going governance of the strategy will be provided through a workstream of Glasgow Economic Leadership, ensuring that it integrates with wider activities for city and city-regional economic development, maximises collaboration between relevant partners and continues to have a clear business focus.
- 4.6 Members are also asked to note that successful delivery of the wider strategy will require attendance at key events by the relevant Elected Member and Officers as appropriate. A budget has been identified to support this activity and any proposed attendance will be evaluated in terms of how it aligns with the Council's strategic priorities and the key strategic markets as articulated in the document. They include:
- COP, building on Glasgow's legacy of hosting the event in 2021, and recognising the centrality of cities and city governance to tackling the challenges of climate change. COP represents an unrivalled opportunity to connect with other cities, learn from best practice, and develop further links with the private and third sectors globally to assist in the transition to net zero.
  - Scotland Week in North America, celebrating the Scottish Diaspora and the continuing influence of Scottish people, culture and innovation. Scotland Week also represents a specific opportunity to highlight new business opportunities for Glasgow companies and to collaborate with partners such as the Universities and the Innovation Districts.
  - MIPIM, held in Cannes, which is the largest gathering of real estate investors in the world and provides access to the greatest number of potential investors at the same time. Attendance at this event helps to raise the city's profile through engagement and networking, as well as working with agencies and partners to maximise collective resource. In 2024, MIPIM was well attended by comparator cities across the UK.
  - Expo Real, held in Munich, is one of the largest property and investment trade fairs in Europe and similarly offers access to a significant number of potential investors and networking opportunities.

- Smart Cities Expo World Congress, which is held in Barcelona, and is the world's biggest event for cities and urban innovation. It provides significant access to comparator cities to exchange knowledge, expertise and assist in exploiting opportunities as they arise.

4.7 Members are asked to note that Invitations to attend conferences and events will continue to be dealt with in line with requirements of the Scheme of Delegated Functions.

4.8 An annual report on progress towards the actions in it can also be brought to the Committee for future scrutiny and discussion.

## 5. Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

*Financial:* There are no direct financial implications from this report for the Council, pending future decisions on the allocation of potential national funds.

*Legal:* There are no direct legal implications arising from this report for the Council.

*Personnel:* Actions relating to the proposals in this report will be undertaken using existing staff resources.

*Procurement:* There are no direct procurement issues arising from this report.

**Council Strategic Plan:** This work supports Grand Challenges 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, with a particular focus on increasing job opportunities and prosperity within a net zero economy.

### Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25* Further work will be undertaken on the specific equality aspects of each of the strategy's recommendations as they are progressed.

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* The Council's approach to this opportunity has the potential to create well-paid jobs and support inclusive growth.

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio economic disadvantage.*

This work is both informed by and supports the principles of the Just Transition Skills Action Plan.

### **Climate impacts:**

*Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:*

The work noted in this report both contributes to the key aims of the Climate Plan in relation to a greener economy and innovation for net zero, particularly through learning from global peer city networks.

*What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?*

This work looks to align trade and investment with the city's net zero ambitions and therefore support a range of positive climate impacts.

*Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?*

Yes, this approach is a contributor to the realisation of the city's net zero target through supporting businesses in this sector to grow.

### **Privacy and Data Protection impacts:**

This report has no impacts upon privacy or data protection.

## **6. Recommendations**

### **6.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of the report including the proposed next steps; and
- Approve the attached International Strategy 2025 – 2030 for the city.