Item 3 (b)

17th November 2026

Glasgow Economic Leadership Board

Meeting 50

Monday 5 October 2026, 08.30-10.00

Technology & Innovation Centre
99 George Street, Glasgow G1 1RD

Present

Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Emeritus Principal, University of Strathclyde / GEL co-Chair
Cllr. Ricky Bell, Leader, Glasgow City Council / GEL co-Chair
Chris Courtney, CEO, NMIS / *GEL Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering lead - online*
John Howie, MD, Vanguard Aerospace & Defence Ltd. / *GEL Innovation lead*
Selma Hunter, CEO, Hunter Consultancy
Kam Jandu, CEO, AGS Airports Ltd
Guy Jefferson, COO, Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) / *Green Economy lead*
Chris Johnston, MD Morgan Stanley / *GEL Finance & Business Services lead*
Dominic McKay, CEO, Scottish Events Campus / *GEL Tourism & Events lead*
Professor Stephen McArthur, Principal, University of Strathclyde
Jane Martin, MD, Regional Economic Development Partnerships, Scottish Enterprise
Jim McColl, Chairman & CEO, Clyde Blowers Capital
Susanne Millar, CEO, Glasgow City Council
Cllr. Owen O'Donnell, Vice Chair, GCR Cabinet & Leader, East Renfrewshire Council
Stuart Patrick, CEO, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce / GEL International lead
Professor Andy Schofield, Principal, University of Glasgow

Apologies

David Bunton, CEO, Reprocell Europe / *GEL Life Sciences lead*
Janice Kirkpatrick, Director, Graven / *GEL Creative Economy lead*
Sir Simon Lister, MD, Naval Ships, BAE
Prof. Scott MacGregor, Vice Principal, University of Strathclyde / *GEL HFE lead*

Attending

Kevin Kane, Executive Director, GEL
Alison McRae, Senior Director, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
Kevin Rush, Executive Director, Economic Growth, GCR - *online*
Paul Zealey, Regional Skills Lead, Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Guest

Andrew Robertson, GCR

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

1.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed all to the meeting.

1.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** welcomed **Cllr. Ricky Bell**, Leader of Glasgow City Council to his first meeting of the GEL Board and as co-Chair and noted there is time

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on the agenda for **Cllr. Ricky Bell** to introduce himself to the Board. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** also welcomed **Chris Johnston**, MD at Morgan Stanley who is the new GEL Board lead for Finance & Business Services.

1.3 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that **Chris Courtney** and **Kevin Rush** both joined the meeting online (and noted that **Sir Simon Lister** had also planned to join online, but had contacted him to say that he was unable to attend due to pressing business matters).

1.4 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that for the third consecutive meeting, the Board would discuss the Defence & Security opportunity facing the Glasgow City Region. Today it was the proposed GCR Defence & Security proposition, developed by **John Howie, Sir Simon Lister** and **Chris Courtney,** which was tabled for approval; earlier versions of the plan had been supported by GCC's Intelligence Hub and Scottish Enterprise. The paper had been pre-circulated to Members.

1.5 **Kevin Kane** noted the apologies received (David Bunton, Janice Kirkpatrick, Sir Simon Lister and Professor Scott MacGregor).

1.6 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** passed the Chair to **Cllr. Ricky Bell.**

2 Opening remarks and ambitions for GEL

2.1 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** thanked **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** and noted the "phenomenal" work of GEL in supporting Glasgow and the City Region Cabinet. His ambition for Glasgow is to make it the best city in the world, to grow the economy, attract investment and create jobs and opportunities for all – that is inclusive growth.

2.2 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** noted that his background was in business having worked in the newspaper industry, latterly as Regional MD of the £20M turnover Johnson Press and in his previous post as City Treasurer he was the Chair of the £28BN Strathclyde Pension Fund, one of the largest local authority funds in the UK.

2.3 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** noted that this was an exciting time for Glasgow and the City Region with the focus on greater regional empowerment (plus the Scottish Government's outline proposals for the reorganisation of local government). **Cllr. Ricky Bell** noted that the GCR Cabinet had met recently and agreed to concentrate on what it is doing to develop a winning regional empowerment proposal. **Cllr. Ricky Bell** noted that he was to have an early meeting to discuss this and other matters with the **First Minister, John Swinney MSP**.

3 Minute of 30 June 2026 and Matters Arising

Minute of 30 June 2026

Cllr. Ricky Bell invited the Board to approve the Minute of the Board meeting of 30 June 2026. The Minute was approved.

4 Matters Arising

GEL Board invitations

4.1 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** noted that the co-Chairs' had invited the **First Minister, John Swinney MSP** and the **Cabinet Secretary, Economy, Tourism & Transport, Stephen Flynn MSP** to meet with the Board to discuss progress on regional empowerment and fiscal devolution.

Progress update on Regional Empowerment & 'Devolution Phase II'

4.2 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** invited **Susanne Millar** and **Kevin Rush** to update the Board on the progress of GCR's regional empowerment proposition.

4.3 **Susanne Millar** noted that a huge amount of work had been undertaken by the eight work streams with all having met at least twice. Outputs had been collated and analysed by KPMG and been reported and discussed by the GCR CEOs and Cabinet, as well as by the Oversight Group, chaired by **Professor Sir Jim McDonald**. An outline proposition will be brought to Cabinet in late November 2026.

4.4 **Susanne Millar** noted that the Funding & Governance work stream of Glasgow and Edinburgh included GCC and EDC Finance Directors and CEOs and that she is working well with her counterpart, **Paul Lawerence**, CEO of Edinburgh City Council. **Susanne Millar** also noted that Scottish government were represented on all work streams and that UK government had expressed an interest to be involved, post the new UK administration. **Susanne Millar** noted that the work streams had a wide membership, not solely Council officials.

4.5 **Susanne Millar** noted that the timing of the proposition and its approval is an issue, with the proposal being to seek agreement at the Cabinet meeting in November and then for each Local Authority to seek approval and ratification. **Susanne Millar** noted that to date, the outputs from the Innovation, Economic Development and Poverty work streams had been a valuable addition – with the policy aim of inclusive growth built into GCR's proposition rather than grafted on as was the case in some English city regions.

4.6 **Kevin Rush** noted the aim was still to keep the level of ambition high and that Cabinet Members had asked that "a number be put on this". Interest from UKG was welcome as are ideas such as a percentage of income tax receipts to be assigned to Combined Authorities in England. Such ideas make it important that GCR engage directly with **Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Public Sector Reform**.

4.7 **Susanne Millar** noted that further to the presentation at the previous GEL Board by **John McGhee**, Glasgow's Executive Director of Education, work was ongoing with the **Rt. Hon Alan Milburn** to develop a pilot/pathfinder project for a '6th Form College' as a concrete example of work to prevent /reduce those not in 'Education, Employment or Training' (NEET). A recent dinner which she, **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** and other business leaders and stakeholders had noted the fragmented landscape of private sector and other efforts in this space.

4.8 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted his understanding that when the Milburn (Phase II) Report is launched that **Pat McFadden MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (DWP)** may announce a GCR demonstration project as one of several across the UK.

4.9 **John Howie** thanked **Susanne Millar** and **Kevin Rush** for their updates. **John Howie** said that both the 'what' *and* the 'how' of regional empowerment had to addressed as well as developing two different versions that would address the different policy positions of the Scottish and UK governments. **Cllr. Ricky Bell** agreed that it was important that GCR leverage both governments.

4.10 **Jim McColl** noted the proposal to address the NEET issue and reminded Board Members of his 2014 pilot 'Newlands College' focused on 14- to-16-year-olds in danger of becoming NEET. It had been hugely successful with outcomes of 90%

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going on to positive destinations but had been a pilot and was never mainstreamed. **Jim McColl** argued there are too many pilots and we have to mainstream change. He noted there had been private sector support for the College (e.g. Malcolm Group) to get young people work ready, and that there had been significant literacy and numeracy inputs due to ongoing deficiencies. Once these were addressed employability rose significantly. **ACTION: Professor Sir Jim McDonald asked that the lessons of Newlands College be shared with the Poverty and Skills work streams.**

4.11 **Cllr. Ricky Bell** passed the chair to **Professor Sir Jim McDonald.**

Defence & Security Sector

5. University Defence & Security research profile and capabilities

5.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that today's Defence & Security item was the third consecutive Board meeting where the sector and its opportunities for Glasgow city region would be discussed. Today, the focus was on the proposed GCR Defence & Security proposition that would be taken to the MOD and UKG to best meet their innovation needs. A significant part of our proposition are GCR's significant research base, its innovation and company expertise, skills and the dedicated facilities and place-based assets of Glasgow city region.

5.2 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that Glasgow City Region's Defence & Security universities research profile and capabilities are a significant element in GCR's proposition, and he invited **Professor Andy Schofield** and **Professor Stephen McArthur** in turn to briefly outline these to GEL Members.

5.3 **Professor Andy Schofield** spoke to a presentation that was circulated to the Board after the meeting. He noted that the University of Glasgow had several leading UK and global research strengths that could be used to meet the innovation challenges facing the defence and security sector. These include:

- Quantum, Photonics and Semiconductor technologies (UK-leading James Watt Nanofabrication facility to design/prototype/fabricate/manufacture critical technologies, plus joint research with University of Strathclyde)
- Cyber Resilience and Secure Systems
- Secure Telecommunications and Electromagnetic Systems
- Autonomous Systems, Space and Advanced Sensing
- Biosecurity and Life Sciences (globally-recognised viral research expertise))
- Policy, deterrence and strategic analysis
- Place-based defence and critical technologies cluster

5.4 **Professor Stephen McArthur** spoke to a presentation that was circulated to the Board after the meeting. He noted that the University of Strathclyde had a number of research areas, facilities of direct interest to Defence & Security and innovation. These included:

- 350+ Defence-cleared staff and 10+ key facilities including, for example:
- *AFRC (Advanced Forming Research Centre*): secured programmes with UK and US defence customers

- *PNDC (Power Networks Demonstration Centre)*: Industry-scale high-power network testing for grid resilience & aircraft, ship, & submarine propulsion
- *SCAPA (Scottish Centre for the Application of Plasma-based Accelerators)*: 350 TW laser, the highest-power laser in UK academia, supporting particle, materials and damage studies.
- *PRISM (Platform for Scaling Responsive Space Systems Research, Innovation & Manufacturing)*: New £100M secure facility for responsive space research and spacecraft / component manufacture. Investment Zone-funded.

5.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Professor Andy Schofield** and **Professor Stephen McArthur** for their presentations and for sharing them with the Board and noted that the combination of defence and security related research at Glasgow and Strathclyde universities is outstanding and of UK-wide importance and that they can really play into GCR's D&S proposition. It is noteworthy also that both Strathclyde and Glasgow are now members of the UK Defence Universities Alliance.

5.6 **Jane Martin** asked how it met the **Ian Chapman** challenge of significantly contributing to the UKG's industrial policy priorities. Both **Professor Andy Schofield** and **Professor Stephen McArthur** agreed that there were several areas where Glasgow and Strathclyde's expertise, facilities and joint working (e.g. semiconductors, with end-to-end capabilities) gave any GCR D&S proposition a competitive advantage.

5.7 **Stuart Patrick** cautioned that we do not overlook the importance of our basic research capabilities especially in light of the move of UKRI to invest more in applied research that support industrial policy priorities. **Professor Andy Schofield** agreed that we should frame basic research as the foundation from which applied research is able to contribute to industrial innovation. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that as a Member of the UKRI Clean Energy Programme Board he was aware of the role of the new Chair of Innovate UK, **Tom Adeyoola**, in the future funding of Catapults and that as he and **Chris Courtney** were to meet with him soon. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** would play out GCR's vision and opportunities and the need for continued IUK support.

5.8 **Cllr. Owen O'Donnell** noted that both Glasgow and Strathclyde have a high number of overseas students and researchers. He asked whether there were protocols in place to ensure sensitive research is protected from unauthorised/foreign access. Both **Professor Andy Schofield** and **Professor Stephen McArthur** noted that there are official processes in place to protect UK research interests ('Trusted Research') and that depending on known risks and technologies some foreign nationals are not approved to engage is some research areas.

5.9 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that in taking a "whole systems approach" Glasgow city region has research strengths that are both of nation/UK and international importance. GCR has the strategic commitment to Defence & Security based on the quality of our people, our innovation ecosystem and delivery and that it can make a significant contribution to Scottish and UK re-industrialisation.

6 The Defence & Security Sector Proposition for Glasgow City Region

6.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited **John Howie** to speak to the proposition that had been pre-circulated to GEL Members.

6.2 **John Howie** noted that we had entered a new age of insecurity and that governments across the developed world were seeking to increase their defence and security preparedness. This increase is being driven by significant increases in defence expenditure and is very much innovation-led as military technologies and tactics evolve. Glasgow city region is very well-placed to address the MOD's new defence procurement

environment, as it has a demonstrably healthy innovation ecosystem, dedicated and secure research industrial assets and facilities linked to GCR's universities, practical experience of the delivery of innovation programmes (e.g. Innovation Accelerator, Investment Zone, LIPF) as well as the defence assets of the Clyde/Gairloch defence testing area and the adjacent aerospace assets located at Prestwick. Taken together, these "placed-based assets" give GCR a unique opportunity to attract MOD defence expenditure and sustain/attract jobs, skills and investment.

6.3 **John Howie** outlined a "mission-based" approach that the GEL Defence & Security team proposes that GEL approve. These include the following:

Mission One: Naval Shipbuilding:

- cheaper, faster, better ships
- smaller, less complex vessels

Mission Two: Space Defence Systems

- Starlink-type model
- Market moving towards GCR strengths

Mission Three: Sovereign Critical & Defence Reindustrialisation

- Quantum-based (un-jammable) GPS and navigation systems

Mission Four: SME Engagement

- Bespoke defence-based Innovation Accelerator-type model for MOD.

Mission "X": Submarine Availability & Through-Life Capability

- Need to respond to 700% increase in Russian submarine activity in/near the UK

6.3 **John Howie** noted that the missions shared a number of *key enablers* that are critical and will determine whether GCR can move from research and capability to adoption, procurement and scale. These enablers are (in brief):

1. Autonomous systems & future defence production.
2. New defence production models: including "neo-prime/ firm of firms approaches.
3. Innovation and secure facilities.
4. Training and skills.

6.4 **John Howie** concluded by seeking the approval of the GEL Board to proposed Defence & Security proposition to be recommended to the GCR Cabinet and to be taken to MOD Ministers and senior officials.

6.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that via **Cllr. Owen O'Donnell** a meeting has now been arranged between **Blair McDougall MP, Minister for Reindustrialisation** and **Sir Simon Lister, John Howie** and **Kevin Kane** to brief him on GCR's Defence & Security proposition**. Professor Sir Jim McDonald** also noted an outstanding action from the previous GEL Board **ACTION: to identify and secure meetings in Scotland with key senior MOD officials (to be actioned by Sir Simon Lister & John Howie)**[1]

6.5 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited contributions from GEL Board Members.

[1] To include, for example, Rupert Pearce, UK National Armaments Director, Julie Brettell, MOD Chief Procurement Officer as well as Luke Pollard MP, Defence Procurement Minister.

6.6 **Cllr. Owen O'Donnell** "really welcomed the proposition" and its potential to contribute to inclusive growth across GCR and asked that a figure be put on the scale of the opportunity in terms of GVA, jobs, types of skills (college and university) and asked how "sighted" are the colleges on this opportunity? **Selma Hunter** said it was a "fantastic paper" and asked (i) how do we create that sense of urgency and what are our measures of success, and (ii) noted that data and information access was changing rapidly with AI, which requires a different way of thinking. We need to join things up and "get into digital". **Stuart Patrick** "very much welcomed" the paper and asked how GEL Defence & Security work stream would engage with the Clyde Maritime Alliance? **Chris Courtney**, one of the proposition authors, said it was a unique moment-in-time opportunity that it needed funding to help make it a reality.

6.6 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** formally sought the Board's approval of the paper and its recommendations. The Board approved the paper.

6.7 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that the Board recognised the seminal nature of the paper and on behalf of the GEL Board he thanked the team led jointly by **John Howie** and **Sir Simon Lister,** that included **Chris Courtney (NMIS), Andrew Robertson (GCR), Clare Alexander, Leonore Frame** & **Elaine Morrison (SE), Alasdair Gunn (GCID/UoS)** and **Prof. Chris Pearce (UoG)** for all their hard work in the preparation of the three substantive defence & security papers and presentations that have been brought to the GEL Board in 2026.

7 Developing Glasgow's Young Workforce

7.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that this item was to have followed **John McGhee's** presentation on "Pathways to Sustainable Employment" at the previous Board. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Alison McRae** for her forbearance and invited her to present to the Board.

7.2 **Alison McRae** spoke to a presentation that was circulated to Board Members after the meeting. **Alison McRae** noted that the current *Milburn Review* has estimated that the near one million young people across the UK who are NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training – are costing the economy £125BN p.a. in lost output, taxes and wages, A key plank of the Review's recommendation is to make it mandatory that all young people receive work experience while at secondary school. Work experience is something that the Chamber helps facilitate across a number of programmes including the JP Morgan Chase-funded GROW pilot.

7.3 **Alison McRae** noted that there are a number of key forums for employability in Glasgow and the west of Scotland including: the *Glasgow Employment & Skills Board* (2012) which oversees the work of the Scottish government-funded Developing the Young Workforce ('DYW') Glasgow (there are two other such Boards in GCR: Lanarkshire & East Dumbartonshire (LED) and DYW West (Renfrewshire(s), West Dunbartonshire & Inverclyde). In ten years of operation DYW Glasgow has directly engaged with 1,500 businesses and supported over 250,000 young people transition in to the workforce. In addition, DYW Glasgow's innovation *#NoWrongPath* campaign has topped 130 million+ digital page impressions across its annual "results day" campaigns.

7.4 **Alison McRae** noted that JP Morgan Chase had invested £1M in the GROW pilot programme which has partnered with 145 employers and 80 schools across 8 LA areas to provide 16,000+ hours of work experience to S2/S4 school-age young people. 92% of employers felt it had helped develop employability skills and 95% of young people felt confident in understanding different types of jobs and felt prepared for the world of work. JP Morgan Chase has confirmed that it will match fund other employer-based contributions to enable GROW Phase II to be delivered.

7.5 **Alison McRae** noted the success of 'vattle' a new, easy-to-use online site where employers can post job opportunities to young people. City Building posted 970 jobs and reported a 116% increase in female applications and a 16% increase in applications from ethnic minority applicants.

7.6 In closing, **Alison McRae** urged employers to "get involved" (as the Milburn Enquiry is urging employers to do). **Alison McRae** also noted that the outputs of the programmes discussed have been shared and fed into the Regional Empowerment Skills work stream.

7.7 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** invited contributions from GEL Members**. Jane Martin** asked if there was any tracking data for S2s/S4's? **Guy Jefferson** offered **Alison McRae** to present to employers on the Private Sector work stream that he chairs within Sustainable Glasgow and **Chris Johnston** thanked **Alison McRae** for presenting to members of the GEL Finance & Business Services work stream and noted that Morgan Stanley had found the GROW programme very easy to engage with as an employer.

7.8 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** thanked **Alison McRae** for her presentation on a very important topic for GEL. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that it is a topic whose importance will only grow once the Milburn Review reports (and is delivered) and the outputs of the Regional Empowerment Skills work stream are finalised. **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** hoped that by December 2026 it would be clearer that there would be a clear and coherent GCR skills proposition, including "big ask" round GCR delivery of the Milburn Review recommendations and an at-scale pathfinder delivery proposal.

8. AOB/ DONM

8.1 **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** noted that future meeting dates for the GEL Board in 2027 have been finalised and will be circulated to Members. He asked that the time allocated for each meeting be extended by fifteen minutes to one and three-quarter hours.

8.2 There being no other business, **Professor Sir Jim McDonald** closed the meeting and thanked Members for their contributions.

Kevin Kane
Executive Director
Glasgow Economic Leadership October 2026

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