

Glasgow's Next Chapter

A Policy Report for Scotland's Metropolitan Region

July 2026

Executive Summary

Glasgow is Scotland's only metropolitan region and its largest city, with a population of 635,000 at its core and 1.85 million across the wider Glasgow City Region. The city region generates approximately one-third of Scotland's economic output, business base, research power and employment, and recent independent analysis suggests that closing the gap between Glasgow's economic performance and that of comparable UK and European city regions could add the equivalent of 4.6% of Scotland's GDP – roughly the size of the nation's oil and gas sector.

This report sets out evidence-based recommendations to help Glasgow build on real recent progress and address the challenges that remain. There is good news to report. Glasgow rose thirteen places – the third largest improvement of any UK city – to 18th out of fifty-one cities in PwC's 2025 Good Growth for Cities Index, driven by stronger performance on skills, safety, and work-life balance. Investment is returning to the city centre: The Herald's "Glasgow: The Next Chapter" series this summer has documented a marked uptick in commercial property investment, with developers describing Glasgow as a "sleeping giant," and the city centre's residential population has grown by a third over the past decade, on track to reach the target of 40,000 by 2035. Glasgow City Region's Living Wage campaign exceeded its first-year targets, securing 204 new accredited employers and better pay for around 1,900 workers. And after a year of growing cross-party consensus, First Minister John Swinney committed in December 2025 to legislation enabling greater powers for regional partnerships, starting with Glasgow City Region – a process that continues under the new Parliament elected in May 2026.

At the same time, significant challenges remain and deserve equally serious attention. Glasgow continues to face acute health inequalities, a productivity gap relative to comparable European cities, and long-standing infrastructure deficits in transport, housing, and public realm. Centre for Cities estimates that around 300,000 workers in and around Glasgow are underserved by public transport links to the city centre, constraining access to employment. OECD analysis shows that GVA per worker across UK core cities stands at 86% of the national average – the largest such gap among major OECD economies – and Glasgow's own productivity would be materially higher if it matched the performance of comparable German, Dutch or French cities.

This report has been developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders across business, civic society, arts and culture, transport, commercial property and community sectors, and draws on the latest evidence from the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub, Centre for Cities, PwC's Good Growth Index, the OECD, and reporting in The Herald. Its recommendations are offered in a constructive spirit: Glasgow's future depends on sustained partnership between the UK Government, the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Region and its constituent local authorities, and the business, civic and community organisations that make up the city's fabric. None of the challenges Glasgow faces is the responsibility of any single institution or administration, and none can be solved by any one of them acting alone. What Glasgow needs now is the political will, on all sides, to work together to help the city realise its potential.

Where Glasgow Stands Today

Glasgow's Strengths

Glasgow is a city of remarkable, and often underappreciated, strengths. Internationally recognised for its contribution to economics, medicine, engineering, science, and the arts, and designated a UNESCO City of Music. Glasgow's skilled workforce and available city-centre land have attracted major employers including Barclays, JP Morgan, and Morgan Stanley to establish business campuses in the city. Glasgow attracts more international conference business than any UK city outside London and has one of the largest financial services sectors of any UK city beyond the capital. Its universities compare favourably with those of other UK core cities, and its emerging strengths in fintech, health innovation, defence, net zero technologies and advanced manufacturing continue to diversify the city's economic base. Glasgow has a strong record of hosting major events, including the Commonwealth Games in 2014 and COP26 in 2021.

There are encouraging recent signs that this underlying strength is beginning to translate into renewed momentum. The Herald's "Glasgow: The Next Chapter" series has tracked a marked increase in commercial property investment in the city centre, with several commentators describing Glasgow as a "sleeping giant" now attracting developer interest. New carbon-neutral office and commercial developments – including Cadworks, Buchanan Wharf and 177 Bothwell Street – demonstrate genuine occupier demand for high-quality business space in the city, alongside a £160 million plan to transform Glasgow's Chinatown district. The city centre's residential population has grown by a third over the past decade to 28,341 residents, putting the city on track to meet its target of 40,000 residents by 2035. Meanwhile, Glasgow City Region's defence-related sectors now support an estimated 23,000 jobs across 1,725 businesses and contribute £9.83 billion to the regional economy, positioning the city region to benefit from the UK Government's increased defence spending, including a new £50 million UK Defence Growth Deal.

Remaining Challenges

Alongside this progress, real and persistent challenges remain, and this report does not shy away from them. Glasgow city centre has visibly struggled in places since hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Several stakeholders raised Sauchiehall Street as symptomatic of wider difficulties in coordinating public infrastructure investment with private sector confidence: the loss of anchor retailers including BHS, Watt Brothers and Marks & Spencer, together with the prolonged closure of the CCA, has understandably concerned residents who feel that opportunities to establish a creative quarter in that part of the city have not yet been fully grasped.

Public realm maintenance – broken and uneven pavements, inconsistent street cleaning, litter management, and pest control – was repeatedly raised by stakeholders as a source of frustration, alongside the pace and management of roadworks. These are the everyday basics that residents rightly expect their local authority to deliver and addressing them consistently would do a great deal to restore public confidence, alongside adequate and sustained funding to enable it.

Cultural infrastructure has also been affected by funding pressures across the sector. The Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh Building remains out of use following the 2018 fire, and venues including the Citizens Theatre, the People's Palace and Pollok House have experienced extended closures. Continued, reliable multi-year investment – from national and local government working together with the sector – would help restore and reopen these much-loved assets.

Public transport represents one of the most significant remaining gaps. Glasgow was one of the first three cities in the world to build an underground railway, yet the Subway has never been extended. Centre for Cities' "Miles Better" research estimates that around 300,000 workers in and around Glasgow are underserved by public transport links to the city centre, and that closing Glasgow's transport gap relative to comparable European cities could unlock several billion pounds a year in additional economic output. The cancellation of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link in 2008 is often cited by stakeholders as a missed opportunity, and the case for improved rapid transit to Glasgow Airport remains strong today, particularly given recent growth in international connections.

Comparative Performance

Independent benchmarking shows a city that is improving but still has ground to make up. Glasgow rose thirteen places to 18th out of 51 UK cities in PwC's 2025 Good Growth for Cities Index – the third-largest improvement of any city in the country – reflecting stronger performance on skills, safety and work-life balance, though the city continues to track below the UK average on income and owner-occupation. Glasgow is forecast to be Scotland's fastest-growing city in GVA terms between 2024 and 2027, driven by expansion in professional and financial services, though it continues to lag UK averages overall. OECD analysis shows that GVA per worker across UK core cities stands at just 86% of the national average – the largest productivity gap among major OECD economies – with Glasgow's productivity estimated at 30% below comparable German cities, 26% below Dutch cities, and 22% below French cities. Closing this gap is squarely in the interests of Glasgow, Scotland, and the UK alike, and doing so is one of the central purposes of this report.

Transport and Connectivity

Where Things Stand

Glasgow's transport system has suffered from years of underinvestment and fragmentation between modes, resulting in higher costs, service gaps, and constrained access to opportunity for many residents. Centre for Cities research, together with evidence received from bus operators, found that a lack of dedicated bus infrastructure and traffic congestion require an estimated 20% more resources to maintain comparable service levels than in other major UK cities – costs that are ultimately passed on through fares.

The Subway, never extended beyond its original Victorian route, currently operates with limited hours (last service from Govan at 11:16pm on weekdays, and 10am–6pm on Sundays), and integration between bus, Subway and rail remains poor, with fragmented ticketing and inconsistent service patterns. Night-time and Sunday bus services do not yet fully support the evening and weekend economy, and Centre for Cities estimates that around 300,000 workers in and around Glasgow lack convenient public transport connections to employment opportunities.

Access to Glasgow Airport by public transport also falls short of what residents, businesses and visitors reasonably expect: journeys by bus can be lengthened by congestion on the M8, and current single and return fares (£11 and £17.50) compare unfavourably with equivalent journeys in Edinburgh and other UK and European cities. Given the recent growth in international routes – including a 51% year-on-year increase in Dubai-Glasgow bookings – and new hotel investment, improving this connection is a genuine, shared opportunity rather than a grievance.

The Commission also heard a range of views on parking and low-emission zone policy. On the Ultra Low Emission Zone, several witnesses – including those working in the night-time economy, taxi drivers and charities – raised concerns about the operation of the current fines-based scheme and suggested it could be complemented by measures that actively support the transition to cleaner vehicles. Several stakeholders felt that high city centre parking charges disadvantage city centre traders compared with the largely free parking available at out-of-town retail sites, and that this may be contributing to some displacement of spending rather than a net reduction in car use; there were also concerns raised about the effect of extended residential parking charges on visits to family members, including those who are unwell. These are genuinely contested policy areas, and we recommend further impact assessment, undertaken in partnership with the Council and with affected groups, with a willingness to accept adaptation, rather than a single prescribed outcome.

Recommendations

Bus services and franchising

- Develop a clear, shared plan to grow bus patronage year on year across the city region, supported by a public campaign that repositions bus travel as a mainstream choice for all.
- Progress bus franchising under Transport Act 2019 powers, with Glasgow as an early mover for Scotland, enabling integrated planning, consistent quality standards, and coordinated fares.
- Work to close the estimated 20% cost premium Glasgow faces relative to other UK cities and improve journey times through dedicated bus infrastructure, bus priority at traffic signals and streamlined journey planning.
- Consider a fare cap and simplified pricing structure to boost patronage, drawing on lessons from successful schemes in Manchester and elsewhere in the UK.
- Trial innovative approaches – such as incentive schemes for car-free households or a short period of free travel – and improve digital journey planning to encourage a shift toward public transport.
- Strengthen accountability structures so that local communities have a genuine voice in setting public transport priorities.

Metro development and integration

- Continue to progress an efficient, inclusive metro system for the city region, with a realistic and transparently reported delivery timescale, drawing on the experience of comparable European cities.
- Explore extending Subway operating hours to better support the night-time economy and weekend employment.
- Develop integrated ticketing across bus, Subway, and rail, including a single daily pass with seamless digital payment.
- Treat rapid transit connection to Glasgow Airport as a priority for future investment, alongside interim measures to improve affordability of existing airport bus services.
- Plan for the longer-term expansion of the proposed Clyde Metro to serve growing residential and employment areas across the city region.

Governance and funding

- Encourage Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, local authorities and Transport Scotland to continue developing holistic, joined-up transport planning across all modes.

- Support sustained, multi-year investment in bus partnership funding to give both operators and communities the confidence to plan ahead.
- Review residential parking charges and hours with a view to ensuring they remain proportionate and fair, in consultation with affected communities.
- Ensure major infrastructure and housing decisions prioritise proximity to public transport, so that new development supports rather than undermines the case for sustainable travel.
- Strengthen supervision and public reporting on major road infrastructure projects to improve accountability and minimise disruption.
- Continue to press for an even-handed approach to national marketing and route development support across Scotland's international airports.

Night-time economy and accessibility

- Explore extending later evening rail services between Glasgow and Edinburgh to support the cultural and hospitality sectors.
- Develop an improved night-time bus network serving residential and entertainment areas.
- Consider parking incentives, such as reduced-rate evening parking, to complement improved public transport and support city centre vibrancy.
- Continue to review the ULEZ scheme's operation, including its enforcement approach, working closely with affected sectors as vehicle fleets modernise.
- Support continued investment in West Coast Main Line capacity, including additional platforms at Glasgow Central, to accommodate future growth in inter-city services.

Economy, Skills, and Innovation

Where Things Stand

Glasgow City Region accounts for around one-third of Scotland's output, business base, research power, and employment, generating £48 billion in GVA in 2021, and is forecast to secure half of all new Scottish jobs over the next decade. The city has diversified successfully from historic reliance on heavy industry, building genuine strengths in financial and professional services, life sciences, creative industries, energy, defence, and advanced manufacturing, and has established one of the UK's fastest-growing technology clusters.

Productivity remains the central economic challenge: OECD research shows GVA per worker in UK core cities at 86% of the national average, with Glasgow around 30% behind comparable German cities, 26% behind Dutch cities and 22% behind French cities. Addressing this gap would materially improve living standards and the fiscal capacity of the city region.

Skills provision is a critical enabler. The independent Withers Review identified significant strain across Scotland's skills system, with colleges facing financial pressure, universities under strain, and gaps between employer needs and training provision. The recent need to recruit welders from overseas for defence contracts, due to a shortage of home-trained operatives, illustrates the practical cost of these gaps. Closer regional coordination between employers, education providers and civic partners offers a promising way to close them.

Glasgow's track record of delivery is genuinely strong and worth building on. The £1.13 billion City Deal, the Investment Zone, the Innovation Accelerator, and the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund together demonstrate the city region's capacity to deliver complex programmes when properly resourced. Recent City Deal-funded projects – including the Xworks commercial development in Dalmarnock and the wider £500 million Clyde Gateway regeneration initiative, alongside the ongoing transformation of George Square – show this capacity in action. Glasgow City Region's Living Wage campaign also exceeded its first-year targets, securing 204 new accredited employers and better pay for around 1,900 workers, a genuine and replicable achievement in inclusive growth. An independent review of regional economic development in Scotland, led by Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, has separately highlighted both the value of effective place-based policy and the constraints that fragmented responsibilities and unclear national leadership can place on delivery.

Recommendations

Devolution and governance

- Continue to build the case for a comprehensive devolution deal that gives the city region greater autonomy over economic development, skills, transport, and planning, enabling faster and more effective deployment of resources.
- Build on the Regional Economic Partnership model to establish clear governance, meaningful powers, and adequate resources at city region level.
- Work to reduce fragmentation of responsibilities across national bodies and give the city region the operating flexibility that matches its demonstrated delivery capacity.

Skills and education

- Develop a stronger regional partnership between employers, education providers, and civic partners to identify and address skills needs proactively.
- Build a clear pipeline of skills provision for both innovative growth sectors – defence, advanced manufacturing, fintech, energy, life sciences, net zero – and foundational economy sectors that underpin daily life.
- Strengthen connections between the region's creative talent and its technology sector to support innovation and diversification.
- Improve links between schools and regional skills planning, so pupils and parents are better informed about employment trends and opportunities.
- Support continued strategic investment in further and higher education as core infrastructure for inclusive growth.

Innovation and technology

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to support the region's fast-growing technology cluster, including appropriate physical and social infrastructure, start-up support, and skills investment.
- Build on the success of the Investment Zone, Innovation Accelerator and Local Innovation Partnerships Fund to attract further UK Government and private investment.
- Use a “demonstrator” approach to showcase how new innovations can work at scale, helping attract investors and support commercial deployment.
- Explore the potential of AI to widen access to economic opportunity, including for people with conditions such as ADHD, through accessible and inclusive deployment.

Economic diversification

- Continue efforts to diversify the economy, learning from the risks of over-reliance on any single sector, including retail.
- Support proactive adaptation to structural change, including uncertainty over international student numbers and the effects of AI on financial and professional services.
- Build on strengths in defence, energy, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing while nurturing new clusters in emerging sectors.

Culture, Arts, and Placemaking

Where Things Stand

Glasgow was recognised by the European Commission in 2020 as the UK's top cultural and creative city, and its heritage in the visual and performing arts is a profound civic asset. The city is home to Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the National Theatre of Scotland, world-class museums including Kelvingrove and the Burrell Collection, and celebrated music venues such as King Tut's, and its universities continue to nurture creative talent across disciplines.

This heritage would benefit from more consistent investment. The Mackintosh Building at the Glasgow School of Art remains out of use following the 2018 fire, and venues including the Citizens Theatre, the People's Palace and Pollok House have experienced extended closures pending maintenance and investment. There remains an opportunity to develop a more coordinated strategy for the Art School, Renfrew Street and Sauchiehall Street area as a distinctive cultural quarter, building on genuine underlying strengths.

The city centre's residential population has grown by a third over the past decade to 28,341 people, putting Glasgow on track to reach its target of 40,000 residents by 2035 – a significant and welcome achievement although much of the new building is student accommodation and more needs to be done to accommodate families, including through provision of schools and services to meet the needs of a mixed population in the city centre. This growth sits alongside continuing work to improve the public realm and address perceptions of safety, which some residents and visitors still find off-putting, and alongside real pressure on housing, homelessness, and support services.

Glasgow City Council declared a housing emergency in 2023, and demand for housing and homelessness support continues to exceed supply, a pressure that has been compounded by rising need including among refugees and asylum seekers. Many of the city's brownfield sites – a legacy of its industrial history – remain undeveloped because of the cost of environmental remediation, which pushes new housing toward greenfield sites on the city's edge, often without good public transport connections or developer contributions toward local schools and amenities. Greater capacity – powers and funding – for the city to assemble and remediate development land would help address this and support more sustainable growth. There is also a recognised shortage of family housing and of suitable options for people entering the job market, alongside ongoing debate about the right balance and location of purpose-built student accommodation relative to other housing needs. Scottish Government statistics show that a mere 235 houses for social rent were completed in the city in 2025, the lowest figure since 1996, but in contrast, the

City Council reported in January this year that over 3600 student accommodation beds were currently under construction with a further 5600 in the immediate pipeline. The Council's ambition for the construction within the next five years of 6000 homes for social rent appears to be unrealistic without access to new forms of finance.

Recommendations

Strategic investment

- Recognise the arts and culture sector's economic and social value through consistent, multi-year investment, reflecting its central role in Glasgow's identity and appeal.
- Consider distributive leadership models used successfully in other UK cities to provide a compelling long-term vision for the sector.
- Support the revitalisation of the Art School, Renfrew Street and Sauchiehall Street area as a distinctive cultural quarter, through coordinated national and local investment.
- Invest in and make the most of Glasgow's cultural assets – performing and visual arts, live music venues, and education – for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
- Support timely maintenance and reopening of major cultural venues, including the People's Palace and Pollok House.
- Prioritise new housing for families and for people who have recently entered employment, so more people can live near the jobs Glasgow is creating.
- Increase investment in new social housing and in retrofitting older housing stock.

Visitor economy

- Develop a “single pass” visitor offer covering transport, museums, and entertainment, to enhance the visitor experience.
- Strengthen marketing of the city's accessibility, cultural offer, and distinctive assets.
- Build on growing international connectivity through coordinated tourism development.
- Continue to invest in city centre safety measures, including CCTV coverage and visible policing, to support public confidence.
- Review business rate relief to ensure the night-time economy is treated comparably with equivalent businesses elsewhere in the UK.
- Invest in a visitor information and booking centre near the city's main railway stations.
- Develop family-friendly visitor attractions across the city centre, drawing on approaches used successfully in other European cities.
- Consider planning support – including grants toward accessibility and fit-out costs – to bring underused upper floors in the city centre back into leisure and visitor use.
- Invest in refreshing existing visitor attractions, such as the Glasgow Science Centre.
- Explore the case for a major new visitor attraction that reflects Glasgow's story and its place in the age of technology and AI.
- Support coordinated, city-wide marketing of Glasgow's arts galleries, concert venues, and theatres to a global audience.

Access and participation

- Create a “Cultural Access” scheme for young people aged 15–21, giving them the opportunity to experience live music, theatre and sport, and building lifelong engagement with culture.
- Encourage creative use of empty properties, including short-term lets to cultural sector workers and initiatives to attract office workers back to the city centre, supported where needed by planning and building control capacity within the Council.
- Consider trialling free public transport or extended gallery openings on selected days to support city centre footfall and cultural venues.

Major events and festivals

- Use the legacy from the Commonwealth Games 2026 to create new apprenticeship opportunities spanning sport and the wider arts and performing sectors.
- Explore establishing a permanent summer festival to complement the Edinburgh Festival and highlight Glasgow's distinctive cultural offer.
- Build on the city's strong track record of hosting major events to secure future opportunities that generate economic impact and international profile.

Health, Wellbeing, and Inclusion

Where Things Stand

Glasgow faces some of the most severe health inequalities in the UK, and this remains the area where sustained, cross-government effort is most urgently needed. Male life expectancy in the city's most deprived areas is more than 13 years below that in the least deprived, and premature mortality rates in the most disadvantaged areas are over four times higher than in the least disadvantaged 10% of the country. The “Glasgow effect” – excess mortality beyond what deprivation alone would predict – has been extensively documented.

Scotland has the highest drug-related death rate in Western Europe, with around 70% of deaths occurring among men, and alcohol-specific and suicide deaths are also among the highest in the UK. These are not inevitable outcomes: they reflect decades of underinvestment in prevention, early intervention, and the social determinants of health, including secure employment, affordable housing, education, and community infrastructure – and addressing them will require sustained commitment well beyond any single parliamentary term.

Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness has been notably higher in Glasgow City Region than in other UK core cities, though the most recent Annual Population Survey data shows encouraging movement: the region no longer has the highest rate of economically inactive people due to long-term health conditions among UK core cities, a genuinely positive shift worth building on through continued, holistic support that addresses skills, childcare, housing and employment together.

However, the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities, and since 2010 key indicators including life expectancy and income have stagnated for many in the city's most deprived communities. Continued investment in prevention and in the social determinants of health offers the clearest route to closing these gaps over time.

Recommendations

Prevention and early intervention

- Continue to shift toward upstream prevention, addressing social determinants of health such as employment, housing, education, and community infrastructure alongside crisis intervention.
- Develop holistic, community-focused responses to economic inactivity that address health, skills, childcare and housing barriers together.
- Expand early intervention services, with particular focus on families and young people in areas of concentrated deprivation.
- Sustain investment in addiction services, mental health support and crisis prevention, sized to the level of need.

Housing and homelessness

- Recognise, in funding decisions, that the cost of building in Glasgow is often higher than elsewhere due to ground contamination and remediation costs.
- Take care to avoid concentrating people with complex needs disproportionately in the city's most deprived communities.
- Continue to address chronic homelessness through a combination of adequate housing supply, support services, and preventative intervention.
- Support refugee and migrant communities appropriately, sustaining Glasgow's tradition of welcome without overwhelming local services.
- Continue to tackle fuel poverty and inadequate housing conditions that affect health and life chances.

Tackling health inequalities

- Implement a population health framework tailored to Glasgow's circumstances, with clear accountability and a focus on narrowing inequality gaps, not just improving citywide averages.
- Give particular attention to the wellbeing of young adult men, through targeted employment, housing, community, mental health, and addiction support.
- Strengthen advice and support services that help people build financial resilience, including budgeting, food, and digital skills support.
- Invest in early years education and childcare in deprived communities, recognising education as one of the most powerful health determinants.

Community empowerment

- Provide sustainable, longer-term funding for voluntary sector organisations serving the most deprived communities.
- Support community-led approaches to health improvement that draw on local knowledge alongside formal services.
- Ensure the voices of people with lived experience genuinely shape policy and service design.

Governance, Accountability and Delivery

Where Things Stand

Effective governance and delivery capacity are essential to realising Glasgow's potential, and there is good evidence that the city region has this capacity. The City Deal, the Investment Zone and the Regional Economic Partnership all demonstrate an ability to deliver complex programmes when properly resourced and empowered.

Research by the OECD and Centre for Cities shows that UK core cities receive up to 68% of revenue from central government, compared with an average of 35% in other OECD countries – a degree of fiscal dependence that constrains local autonomy and responsiveness. Fragmented responsibilities across national agencies can also create duplication and friction that make it harder for the private sector to invest with confidence, and major infrastructure projects have at times lacked the consistent leadership needed to avoid delays and cost overruns – the ongoing M8 works at Garscube Road, which have taken considerably longer than originally planned, are one example stakeholders raised repeatedly.

There has been genuine and encouraging progress on the question of devolution over the past year. An independent review of regional economic development in Scotland, led by Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, identified the case for clearer leadership and delineation of responsibilities at national level, and argued that Glasgow and Edinburgh city regions – individually and in combination – are ready to take on greater autonomy and pace than other parts of Scotland. In December 2025, First Minister John Swinney committed to bringing forward legislation enabling legal status and new powers for regional partnerships, starting with Glasgow City Region. This built on a rare degree of consensus across the political spectrum during 2025, reflected in Glasgow City Region's own devolution proposals and in analysis from organisations including Centre for Cities.

Important questions remain open, and reasonable people differ on the answers. Legal status for the city region is not the same as the creation of a combined authority with its own budget, investment and staffing powers, and the right governance model – including whether the city region should eventually move toward a directly elected mayor, as some organisations have proposed, or continue with the current cabinet model favoured by the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Region – is still being worked through. The Scottish Parliament elected in May 2026 returned no single party with a majority, which may itself create a genuine opportunity for cross-party agreement on how devolution should work in practice.

Recommendations

Devolution deal

- Continue to negotiate a comprehensive devolution deal for Glasgow City Region, covering economic development, skills, transport, and planning powers, together with the fiscal reforms needed to exercise them effectively.
- Build the deal on the Regional Economic Partnership model, while strengthening governance, accountability, and democratic legitimacy – including open consideration of the case for a directly elected mayor alongside the current cabinet model.
- Clarify the respective roles of the UK Government, the Scottish Government and city region authorities, to reduce duplication and friction.

- Consider a joint Glasgow-Edinburgh approach where combined metropolitan capacity could accelerate progress, drawing on international examples of metropolitan governance.

Accountability and delivery

- Strengthen accountability for large-scale public projects by appointing dedicated lead officials and consistent delivery teams.
- Establish clearer consequences and stronger project management practice to reduce delays and cost overruns on major projects, building on lessons from projects such as the continuing M8 works at Garscube Road.
- Invest in project management capability across the public sector through training, recruitment, and shared learning.
- Require transparent, regular public reporting of progress, costs and lessons learned on major programmes.

Fiscal capacity

- Increase fiscal autonomy for the city region through revenue-raising powers and greater retention of the benefits of locally generated growth.
- Consider adjusting national fiscal rules to give more weight to long-term value creation alongside short-term expenditure limits.
- Enable borrowing powers appropriate to the city region's scale and delivery track record.
- Ensure funding formulae accurately reflect the concentrations of need Glasgow faces, rather than relying solely on per capita measures.

Partnership working

- Build on the successful collaboration between the eight local authorities in the city region, maintaining momentum on joint initiatives.
- Strengthen relationships with the UK Government to sustain investment through the Investment Zone, Innovation Accelerator, and future growth programmes.
- Continue to engage systematically with business, the voluntary sector, universities and communities in policy development and delivery.
- Share learning with other UK core cities and international metropolitan regions to accelerate improvement.

Conclusion: Working Together for Glasgow's Future

Glasgow stands at a genuinely hopeful moment. The city's proud history of innovation in economics, medicine, engineering, science and the arts, its status as a UNESCO City of Music, and its role at the heart of Scotland's only metropolitan region provide a strong foundation. The recent rise in the PwC's Good Growth for Cities Index, renewed investor interest documented by The Herald, growing momentum on devolution, and the delivery of major programmes like the City Deal and Clyde Gateway all show that Glasgow's potential is not merely latent – it is beginning to be realised.

Realising it fully will mean continuing to address some genuinely difficult, longstanding issues: a productivity gap relative to comparable European cities, acute health inequalities, and infrastructure – especially in

transport and public realm – that has not always kept pace with the city's ambitions. These are the product of many years of decisions by many different institutions and addressing them will likewise require sustained cooperation across all of them, not a search for blame.

The recommendations in this report, developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders across business, civic society, arts and culture, transport, commercial property and community sectors, offer a practical, shared roadmap across transport and connectivity, economy and skills, culture and placemaking, health and wellbeing, and governance and delivery. Implementing them will require genuine partnership between the UK Government, the Scottish Government, and the city region, each playing to its strengths, and continued ambition, delivery capacity, and collaboration from the city region itself.

The Scottish Parliament elected in May 2026 offers a real opportunity for that kind of partnership: with no single party holding a majority, there is scope – and arguably a necessity – for cross-party agreement on the practical steps needed to support Glasgow's future. This report is offered in that spirit. Glasgow's future will be best served by leaders across every party and every level of government who are willing to work together, focus on outcomes for residents, and give the city region the tools, powers, and investment to match its ambition.

Glasgow's city centre, its beating heart, deserves sustained attention over the next five years from national and local government alike, so that Glaswegians can put their grit, talent, ambition, and strong sense of community to work. Glasgow needs more people to visit it, to build on its reputation for live music, arts, sport, and theatre, and to be welcoming to children, disabled people, older people, and everyone in between. Achieving this will require joined-up strategic planning, coordinated public and private investment, and a shared can-do attitude between the public and private sectors – Glasgow will not achieve its ambitions without the private sector's genuine partnership and investment, alongside the public sector's.

Manchester's experience shows what sustained, cross-party, cross-sector commitment to a city region can achieve over time. Glasgow has the ingredients: talented people, a strong economic base, distinctive culture, and genuine, growing momentum. What is needed now is continued coordination, sustained investment, and the political will – across all parties and all levels of government – to see it through. The choice is not between decline and renewal; the evidence in this report shows renewal is already under way. The task now is to build on it, together.