



URBAN PIONEERS

2024



Glasgow

Glasgow City Region – A Metropolis reborn

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- **DURATION**
Ongoing
- **POPULATION 2024**
1.708.000 (Growth Rate 0,59%)
- **URA SCOPE**
ECOLOGY. Green Urbanism

SOCIETY. Staying Human

ECONOMY Urban Prosperity Beyond GDP
STRATEGY. Shared Vision
- **TOPICS**
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATIONS,
REGIONAL ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT,
INCLUSIVE GROWTH, REGENERATION,
LOCAL EMPOWERMENT,
- **MAIN ACTORS**
UK and Scottish Governments, Universities,
Public Authorities, Private Sector,
Professor Greg Clark



Glasgow is a city of reinvention, a place where history meets innovation, and challenges spark transformation. Once a titan of trade and heavy industry, the city bore the brunt of post-industrial decline, only to rise again as a dynamic force in Scotland's economy. Today, Glasgow stands as the heartbeat of a thriving metropolis—rich in heritage, alive with diversity, and unrelenting in its pursuit of renewal.

Over the past decade, the Glasgow City Region—home to one-third of Scotland's population and one of the United Kingdom's largest metropolitan areas—has embarked on an extraordinary journey of transformation. It has rewritten its story, evolving from an industrial powerhouse to a world-class hub for the knowledge economy. Fields like MedTech, marine innovation, advanced manufacturing, and precision engineering now define the city's future, showcasing its adaptability and forward-thinking spirit.

This renaissance hasn't just been about economics; it's been about reconnection—both literally and metaphorically. Flagship projects such as the smart canal and Innovation Districts are forging new links between previously isolated neighbourhoods, creating a more cohesive and accessible city. These ventures reflect Glasgow's commitment to empowering its people and reshaping its identity.

The city's most profound transformation, however, lies in its governance. Glasgow has championed the principle of city-region devolution, shifting power from national government to local leaders who know their communities best. This collaboration between eight local authorities, representing a metropolitan area of 1.8 million, has set a new standard for how cities can take control of their destinies. No longer just a recipient of national funding, Glasgow has become a model of regional leadership and decision-making.

Glasgow's vision extends far beyond its borders. As a host of COP26 and an UN-recognized Role Model City for urban biodiversity, it has established itself as a global leader in tackling the climate emergency. Through initiatives like the 3CI network and its groundbreaking climate investment model, Glasgow is not just adapting to a changing world—it's shaping the future.

This is Glasgow's story: a city that refuses to stand still, driven by resilience, innovation, and an unwavering belief in its ability to lead. From its industrial roots to its place at the forefront of global progress, Glasgow is proof that transformation isn't just possible—it's inevitable when fuelled by vision and determination.



Impact

Glasgow is undergoing a significant transformation, marked by numerous City Deal projects that have recently been completed or are nearing completion. While the full impact of these initiatives will unfold in the coming years, several successes are already visible. The Sighthill project, for example, has successfully established a vibrant new community, complete with modern housing, educational facilities, and amenities that are now seamlessly integrated into the city centre.

Major investments are further reshaping the landscape of the city. Barclays' new facility, Scotland's largest inward investment to date, has revitalized the south bank of the River Clyde, resulting in the creation of 4,000 high-value jobs. Following Barclays, JP Morgan launched its own offices in early 2024, contributing an additional 2,700 jobs to the heart of the city and further cementing Glasgow's appeal to major employers.

Since 2017, Glasgow has witnessed significant economic growth, with employment rising by nearly 20,000 positions, a notable 5% increase. Meanwhile, the number of residents without qualifications has dropped by over 18,000, and economic inactivity has decreased by 17,000. Impressively, unemployment now rests at a record low of 3.3%.

This progress is no coincidence; Glasgow's capacity to drive transformative change has prompted both the local and national governments to devolve more responsibilities and funding to the city. Since 2022, Glasgow has secured an additional £300 million for crucial areas such as innovation, business support, labour market development, capital investment, and the energy transition—funds directly managed by local leaders.

Glasgow's evolution continues, transitioning from its roots as the cradle of the industrial revolution to becoming Scotland's retail capital, and now emerging as an inclusive, innovative, ecological, and empowered metropolis. Its future gleams with promise, matching the vibrancy of its storied past.

The Challenge

Glasgow has faced significant challenges in its journey of transformation and sustainability. A key issue has been managing the impacts of the climate emergency, particularly the increased risk of flooding in urban areas due to heavy rainfall. This threat highlighted the need for innovative infrastructure solutions to protect communities and support sustainable urban growth.

Social and economic inequality has also posed a persistent challenge, with certain areas of the city remaining disconnected from economic opportunities. Communities such as those near the Sighthill area or along the River Clyde faced barriers to inclusion, limited access to the city centre, and insufficient infrastructure linking deprived neighbourhoods with more prosperous areas.

Glasgow's legacy as an industrial city also left behind structural issues, including underutilized spaces along the River Clyde, requiring regeneration and a cohesive vision to unlock the area's potential for growth and development.

Finally, the city has grappled with ensuring local leadership has the power and resources to make impactful decisions. Historically, reliance on centralized governance slowed progress, creating a need for localized, data-driven approaches to address interconnected urban challenges effectively.

Solution Proposed

Glasgow is a leader in tackling the climate emergency and enhancing urban living. As host of COP26, the city built its reputation for sustainability and was recognized by the UN as a Role Model City for urban biodiversity, alongside Paris, Toronto, and Cape Town. As a founding member of the 3CI initiative, Glasgow has developed a climate investment model to finance transformative environmental projects.

The Glasgow City Deal, a £1.13 billion investment fund, has been the engine driving much of this change. Key flagship projects include:

The Smart Canal: Europe's first dynamic canal system, designed to manage rainfall and mitigate flooding, unlocking the potential for 3,000 new homes.

The Sighthill Bridge: A pedestrian bridge connecting a previously isolated community to the city centre, fostering inclusive growth.

The Govan-Partick Bridge: An opening bridge over the River Clyde, linking a deprived area to the affluent West End, redefining urban connectivity.

Glasgow is developing a masterplan for the River Clyde corridor and has appointed its first Head of Place to promote sustainable growth. Supported by the UK's only Regional Intelligence Hub, these efforts include 21 projects aimed at tackling climate challenges while fostering inclusive regeneration and innovation.