Economic Development

An Introduction to Invest Glasgow – How We Are Supporting Inward Investment

Glasgow City Council

Background

Glasgow City Council, through Invest Glasgow, has established a focused inward investment strategy and approach to attract and retain high-value investment, strengthen the city's global profile, improve collaboration with partners, and ensure the city and region are investment ready. The work covers both capital investment, including real estate and regeneration opportunities, and foreign direct investment (FDI) and sector-focused investment linked to industrial sectors and innovation clusters.

The strategy builds on Glasgow's position as Scotland's largest city and metropolitan region, with strengths in talent, affordability, innovation, connectivity and quality of life. A key priority is to communicate clearly why businesses and investors should choose Glasgow, while also ensuring the city has the sites, infrastructure, accommodation, research capability and skills pipelines needed to respond effectively to investor demand.

Key activities

1. Building Clear Propositions

Invest Glasgow has developed investment propositions that explain the city region's strengths in a way that is relevant to different sectors and audiences. These propositions are shaped by evidence, economic analysis and an understanding of what businesses need when choosing a location. Recent activity has included proposition development around critical technologies, including semiconductors, quantum and photonics, as well as advanced manufacturing opportunities linked to the investment zone.

2. Using Data and Intelligence

The work is supported by data, market intelligence and tools that help Glasgow City Council understand investment trends, business needs and potential opportunities. This includes using evidence to inform decision-making, identifying companies that may be interested in Glasgow, and supporting more targeted lead generation. Economic analysis also helps clarify where the city region is already strong, what is emerging, and where investment should be focused.

3. Coordinating Investor Activity

Invest Glasgow works as part of a "Team Glasgow" approach, working closely with agencies, government partners, regional partners, universities, colleges, property partners and national bodies to provide coordinated support to businesses and investors. Invest Glasgow helps investors navigate the city's offer, from understanding market opportunities and suitable locations to connecting with local partners, networks and business support. The support offer also includes soft landing space through inward investor incentives, with 50% of rent capped at £10,000 in year one.

4. Promoting Glasgow Externally

Invest Glasgow leads all promotional activity and takes part in major investment and real estate events, inward investment missions and international delegation activity. This includes activity in markets such as the United States and Western Europe, as well as engagement through national and UK-wide partners. Major events identified include MIPIM, UKREiiF and EXPO REAL, which are used to promote real estate, regeneration and foreign direct investment opportunities.

Benefits and impact

A More Consistent City Offer

One of the main benefits of the approach is that Glasgow City Council, through Invest Glasgow, has created a clearer and more consistent way of explaining the city region's strengths. This matters because different investors and businesses need different information, and the city's offer must be adapted without losing its overall message. The work recognises that a space company, a medtech company and a real estate investor may all need a different pitch, but each should still receive a clear explanation of why Glasgow is a strong location. This consistency also supports partner confidence. By equipping agencies, local partners and wider stakeholders with the Glasgow offer, the city region is better able to present itself as part of a coordinated wider Scottish proposition. This helps avoid fragmented messaging and supports a more unified approach to investor engagement.

Stronger Investment Readiness

The work has placed emphasis on readiness, not just promotion. Glasgow City Council has considered whether the city has the right infrastructure, accommodation, sites, skills and research capacity to support businesses once interest has been generated. This is important because attracting investment is only one part of the process; retaining businesses and helping them succeed is equally important. The focus on investment readiness also helps identify gaps and opportunities. For example, the work around the River Clyde corridor, Clyde Mission and development sites reflects an understanding that regeneration opportunities need to be connected to infrastructure, transport links and investor confidence. The addition of improved connectivity, including the Renfrew Bridge, is helping to unlock development sites along the Clyde.

Better Use of Glasgow's Strengths

The approach helps Glasgow City Council make better use of the city region's existing assets. These include six universities and six colleges, a strong graduate pipeline, high levels of degree-level education among the working-age population, and an affordable operating environment compared with London and other locations. The city region also has strengths in digital, advanced manufacturing, creative industries, health and life sciences, digital and enabling technologies and the wider innovation economy. These strengths support Glasgow's ability to compete for investment in sectors where talent, affordability and innovation matter. The case for Glasgow is not based on one factor alone, but on the combination of workforce quality, cost effectiveness, connectivity, business environment, research capability and quality of life.

Positive External Recognition

Glasgow's investment profile is supported by external rankings and recognised sector strengths and is currently ranked 4th among UK cities outside London. It has also been ranked third largest city in Europe for investment strategy, recognised as a significant global financial centre, ranked fourth globally for quantum ecosystems, and identified as part of the world's largest small satellite production capability. These rankings are useful because they provide concise evidence that can be used in conversations with investors and partners. They help translate complex economic strengths into clear messages that can be understood quickly by external audiences.

Learning and reflections

Clarity Needs Evidence

A key learning point is that a strong investment message requires evidence behind it. Glasgow City Council also has the Regional Intelligence Hub and therefore has invested in intelligence, economic analysis and tools to underpin the city's story so it is credible, provides confidence and clarity to businesses and investors over future outlook. Data helps identify priority sectors, understand business needs, track trends and target lead generation more effectively. This is especially important when audiences are varied. Investors are likely to want clear evidence on costs, talent, sites, infrastructure, sector depth and market opportunity. The work shows the value of combining a simple message with enough supporting detail to make that message convincing.

Collaboration is Essential

Another clear reflection is that inward investment cannot be delivered by one organisation alone. The Council's approach is supported by working closely with stakeholders which is reflected in the wider Team Glasgow and Team Scotland approach, where different partners bring different relationships, expertise and capacity. This collaborative way of working also helps ensure that investors receive joined-up support. When partners have a shared understanding of the offer, it becomes easier to respond quickly, provide relevant information and connect businesses with the right people.

Promotion Must Connect to Delivery

A further reflection is that external promotion is only effective if it is connected to delivery capacity. Glasgow City Council's work makes clear that being visible at events, in missions and with delegations must be matched by a practical ability to support investors when interest turns into action. This includes having the right property information, partner connections, incentives, business support and ecosystem links available. This reinforces the importance of readiness. A strong city profile can generate opportunities, but those opportunities need to be converted through coordinated support, relationship management, customer service and practical follow-through.

Retention is as Important as Attraction

The approach also shows that inward investment should not be seen only as a pipeline of new prospects. Existing businesses are a vital part of the city region's economic strength, and retaining them depends on understanding their needs and helping them access the right support. This learning is particularly relevant in a changing investment environment, where large foreign direct investment projects with high job numbers may be less common than in the past. Remote working, access to talent, affordability and wider conditions have changed the nature of investment, making the scale-up economy and clustering approach increasingly important.

Glasgow City Council has developed a positive, practical and evidence-based approach to inward investment that brings together clear messaging, partner coordination, investor support and a strong focus on readiness. The work demonstrates how a city can promote its strengths while staying grounded in what businesses need, helping Glasgow present a confident and credible offer to investors, partners and growing companies.

Contact for enquiries

Samantha Barnett
Samantha.Barnett@glasgow.gov.uk