

Edinburgh signs Six Cities pledge

Leaders from Scotland's six cities last week joined forces to sign a pledge in support of a shared vision of success for Scotland.

At a historic meeting in Stirling, Scotland's cities – Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Inverness and Stirling – launched Scotland's first Six Cities: Shared Vision pledge.

The vision pledge – the first the cities have issued jointly – focuses on their shared economic ambitions and priorities. It identifies six key areas for partnership with the Scottish Government to deliver long-term and sustainable growth.

The vision focuses on:

1. Building infrastructure that delivers economic impact
2. Developing innovative finance & investment models
3. Developing cities as the creative centres of productivity, knowledge and innovation
4. Cities being at the heart of Scotland's sustainability
5. Recognising the cities' economic contribution to Scotland
6. Creating international trade and tourism strategies which recognise the cities as gateways to Scotland

Driving forward this shared vision of a successful, inclusive and sustainable Scotland is promised to make our cities stronger on the international stage, provide more opportunities and maximise the potential of their educational institutions.

The six cities joint working has been facilitated through Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Scotland's leading independent economic development network.

SCDI Chief Executive, Dr Lesley Sawers said: “Scotland’s cities are the economic, cultural, social and intellectual powerhouses of Scotland. They are distinct and different but their success is essential to Scotland’s long-term future.

“The success of our cities is vital to the regions and rural communities that surround them. The Six Cities pledge is an opportunity for all of Scotland’s cities to work with each other, the Scottish Government and other organisations to deliver our shared ambitions for economic success.”

Cllr Jenny Dawe, Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council, said:

“Edinburgh and Glasgow have demonstrated for many years that working collaboratively is a potent recipe for success. Extending this approach to all cities across Scotland will significantly enhance the nation’s international competitiveness.”

SCDI is Scotland’s leading economic development organisation representing 1,200 companies, SMEs, public sector bodies, charities, trade unions and faith groups. SCDI’s aim is to influence and inspire government and key stakeholders to create sustainable economic prosperity for Scotland.

Scotland’s six cities act as hubs for Scotland’s business, tourism, social and cultural life. Evidence is growing on the importance of cities to creating sustainable economic growth while governments and investors see cities as key drivers of both regional and national economies, offering solutions to the social and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

Despite accommodating just 27% of Scotland’s population, Scotland’s cities produce:

- 47% of Gross Value Added – more than £44bn
- 43% of business turnover

- 40% of jobs
- 36% of research and development

In November 2010, SCDI's Cities Conference brought together Scotland's Six Cities. The conference was attended by more than 100 delegates, including business leaders, senior civil servants, politicians, academics and local authority representatives and focused on the role of Scotland's cities individually and collectively as key drivers of our nation's future economy.

Key issues for Scotland's cities identified and debated at the November conference included:

- How do they compete effectively on a UK and international basis?
- What will ensure they are vibrant and successful places to live, work and visit?
- How do we maximise their combined strengths yet celebrate their diversity?
- How can Scotland's cities become a powerhouse of new innovation, and a major support for Scotland's businesses?
- How can Scotland's cities be sustainable and meet carbon reduction targets
- How do Scotland's cities maximise their connectivity with each other and with international markets?

At the Six Cities Conference, Professor Duncan MacLennan of St Andrews University made the case for a clearer, more concise articulation of city policy for Scotland and greater strategic decision making which delivered competitiveness and social justice. He also identified potential to change the community and environmental planning vision.

The OECD makes recommendations on policy for cities. These include:

- A flexible strategic vision is necessary to foster competitiveness, ensure a diversified range of interdependent ventures, and information and transportation links between universities, researchers, technicians, and manufacturers.
- Liveable cities with high-quality infrastructure, green spaces, and inner city residential areas and public projects can contribute to economic success, attracting foreign investors as well as highly qualified professionals and tourists.
- Effective governance of cities depends on leadership from the national government to encourage reform, a formal government at the metro-regional level, and lower level local networks that include non-governmental actors, associations and businesses which can deal with social tensions and understand market realities.

The Centre for Cities report, *Cities Outlook 2011*, identified Scotland's major cities as being in better shape to avoid a double-dip recession than those elsewhere in the UK. The report identified the importance of giving cities more power and flexibility to respond in more flexible ways to challenges and identify and support growth.