

PE2131/C: Grant Scottish rivers, including the River Clyde, the legal right to personhood

Glasgow City Region written submission, 4 April 2025

The Committee agreed to write to Glasgow City Region (GCR) seeking its views on the action called for in the petition to preserve and protect the Clyde, as well as further information on the work being undertaken to deliver Clyde Mission. The Committee has also requested views on action that could be undertaken to formalise and improve accountability in the management of the River Clyde.

GCR is comprised of the local authorities of East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. Following the signing of a City Deal between the authorities and the Scottish and UK Governments, the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Cabinet was established in 2015 as a Joint Committee constituted under Section 57 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Cabinet is specifically responsible through a Minute of Agreement for decision making in relation to the City Deal, strategic economic development priorities as well as any other activities agreed by the authorities. The action called for is outside of that remit, so GCR is not able to provide a view on that element.

We are able to provide the following information on the Clyde Mission initiative. Clyde Mission was launched by the Scottish Government in 2020 with the intention of: *“making the Clyde an engine of sustainable and inclusive growth for the city, the region, and for Scotland”*. It has been described as the greatest development opportunity in western Europe.

The fourth National Planning Framework highlights Clyde Mission as a ‘national development’, stating it will:

“...revitalise a major waterfront asset which is currently under-utilised. This will support the delivery of our spatial strategy by attracting investment and reuse of brownfield land in west central Scotland where there is a particular need to improve quality of place, generate employment and support disadvantaged communities. It will also support adaptation to climate risks.”

Annex C includes further information about the national spatial strategy and its implementation at a regional and local scale. In respect of Clyde Mission, it states:

“The Clyde Mission will stimulate investment in sites along the Clyde to build a wellbeing economy and achieve a step-change in the quality of the environment for communities.”

The Clyde Mission footprint covers a large and diverse area that includes a mix of urban and rural places, three Innovation Districts and two World Heritage Sites at New Lanark and the Antonine Wall. The evolution of the river over centuries as a source of energy, food and water, a crossing point and a means of transport (amongst many other functions) has spawned many places of cultural and historic significance, and left an indelible imprint on collective memory and identity.

Today, over 100,000 people live within 500 metres of the 80 mile long river corridor. That same footprint supports over 160,000 jobs across 6,600 businesses including Barclays, JP Morgan and Thales, as well as a resurgent maritime sector encompassing BAE Systems, Clydeport, Malin Group and HMNB Clyde near Helensburgh. The corridor is a hub for the country's creative and cultural sector including the SEC, the Citizen's, Tron and Denny Civic theatres, Beacon Arts Centre, SWG3, Riverside Museum, BBC and STV.

Extensive City Deal funding is transforming the riverside with projects to remediate land, deliver new homes and commercial development, improve public realm and connectivity along and across the river, including three new bridges which will reconnect communities and create new corridors of job opportunities.

In August 2023 the Scottish Government transferred lead responsibility for Clyde Mission to GCR and Argyll and Bute Council, with £25 million capital funding for a Heat Decarbonisation Fund and £1.5 million revenue funding for a dedicated team and to develop a Strategic Masterplan.

The Strategic Masterplan will explore and develop how best to deliver this mission across strategic themes, signature locations and priority actions. The draft aims of preparing a Strategic Masterplan are to:

- Engage and activate stakeholders to ensure Clyde Mission is responsive and secures long term commitment to its delivery.
- Ensure Clyde Mission is coherent and impactful by reviewing its themes and priorities and setting out a clear and compelling place-based strategy that resonates.
- Develop a phased programme for delivery that is tangible, ambitious, viable and primed to secure investment from multiple sources.

A Strategic Outline (Business) Case will be produced to accompany the Strategic Masterplan to strengthen evidence based decision making and underpin long term investment. Procurement is set to get underway in April and work on the Strategic Masterplan is expected to commence in the summer.

Governance of Clyde Mission has been incorporated into existing regional structures for GCR, i.e. with reports being submitted to the Chief Executives' Group, Regional Economic Partnership and Cabinet as required. Officers from Argyll and Bute will advise and co-ordinate any reporting/approval requirements in relation to Argyll and Bute Council, with support from GCR Place as necessary.

Consistent with the approach for other strategic spatial delivery priorities, emerging thinking is to establish a Clyde Mission Partnership Board in due course. The role, remit and membership of the Board will evolve in parallel with development of the Strategic Masterplan.

I trust the above is of assistance to the Committee.