

Visit to Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland, Paisley on 26 August 2025

Committee Members:

Kenneth Gibson MSP (Convener) John Mason MSP, Liz Smith MSP, and Michelle Thomson MSP

Attendees:

Scottish Enterprise

- David McLay, Director of Scaling Innovation

AMIDS

- Judy George, Asset Management Director, Buccleuch Property
- Mark Jones, Director, Tweed Property Consultants

Renfrewshire Council

- Barbara Walker, Programme Director, City Deal and Infrastructure
- Euan Shearer, Regeneration and Place Manager

NMIS

- Chris Courtney CEO
- Siobhan Campbell, Chief Strategy & Commercial Officer

CPI

- Frank Millar, CEO
- Paul Blakeman, Strategic Partnerships Manager

Background

1. The Committee agreed, as part of its Business Planning Day, to visit the [Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland](#) (AMIDS) in Paisley on the afternoon of Tuesday 26 August. The purpose of the visit is to inform the Committee's Pre-Budget 2026-27 scrutiny on Responding to Long-Term Fiscal Pressures.

The AMIDS site

2. A joint venture established between Renfrewshire Council and Buccleuch Property with close links to academia, AMIDS sits on a 52-hectare site and is part of the Glasgow Airport Investment Area. Located on the site are the:
 - National Manufacturing Institute Scotland
 - Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (MMIC)
 - Oligonucleotides Medicines Innovation Centre of Excellence (OMICE) (construction paused pending strategic review)
 - University of Strathclyde's Advanced Forming Research Centre and Lightweight Manufacturing Centre
 - University of Strathclyde's newly opened Advanced Net Zero Innovation Centre (ANZIC)

3. The benefits of clustering in an innovation district were explained as having anchor research institutions, a specialist infrastructure, talent and skills, a collaborative eco-system, supportive policy and investment, business support, custom buildings to suit user need and global connectivity. The site is close to Glasgow International Airport and Westway industrial park with international manufactures like Boeing and Rolls Royce.
4. Funding to date has mostly been public sector. This funding was described as early catalyst funding to put in place or improve roads and other infrastructure and to incentivise private sector investment. The outline business case for the site was approved by Glasgow City Region Cabinet in December 2016, with planning consent for the main infrastructure granted in late 2017 and the final business case approved in February 2019. The project has a regeneration focus with the aim of building workers' skills in the local area. It also has eco-credentials with Scotland's first ever fifth-generation renewable energy network providing heat and hot water, which is 90% greener than using a gas boiler. There is lots of space for expansion and longer-term it is hoped that housing will follow to the area.
5. When asked about the length of time it has taken to progress the project, it was noted that statutory processes can take a long time. Also, that external factors out with their control can affect progress e.g. Covid. Over the next 15 years there is proposed commercial development with marketing aimed to attract key innovation industries including aerospace and pharma. Members were interested in when the site would reach output. Harwell Innovation Hub in Oxfordshire had taken 50 years to develop. AMIDS is part of the UK Innovation network and could become a credible alternative to Harwell for some sectors where Glasgow is already a leading manufacturing location.

Governance

6. Renfrewshire Council formed a Development Partnership LLP with Tarras Park Properties Ltd, part of Buccleugh Property in 2023. This "enables the Council to take the district to the next level and achieve long-term growth". The Partnership is overseeing development of a 'tech terrace', a purpose-built facility for start-ups and SMEs, as part of up to £7.6 million invested by Buccleugh in the initial development phase. An active Strategic Advisory Group involves twelve partners including Renfrewshire Council, Scottish Enterprise, University of Strathclyde and the High-Value Manufacturing Catapults at AMIDS (NMIS & CPI), Skills Development Scotland and West College Scotland.

Attracting investment

7. Members asked whether the timescale for locating at the site could be off-putting to investors, particularly as it is competing with investments which may have quicker returns. Additionally, Members noted that the planning

environment itself could be assessed as a risk for private clients. It was emphasised that AMIDS needs to work with both the UK and Scottish governments and so there are complexities, but it has created a cohesive public/private sector environment. It is not an easy delivery process, and can be expensive to build, which is why processes are in place first, like funding and infrastructure.

8. The project needs to be of international standard to attract global companies and anchor tenants are key to attracting and clustering commercial entities. Investors are attracted by facilities which will help them to reach productivity quickly. Investors, however, must have sufficient liquidity for any deal to be credible. It is therefore important to focus on attracting the right businesses and this takes time. Construction is to begin on the £59 million AMIDS South project shortly, which is intended to improve connections to Paisley town centre, through a new road bridge, roads and active travel route.

Research and development

9. The NMIS eco-system was described as early innovation, applied research and development, followed by commercialisation. There are close links with academics, including working with SPEERI, a Scottish Partnership in Energy and Engineering Research & Innovation which comprises of 14 Scottish universities working collaboratively with industry, public sector and government to maximise impact in energy and engineering research and innovation.

Talent pipeline, jobs growth and retention of high-value jobs

10. It is important to work with the right industries and develop the talent pipeline for the engineering and manufacturing sectors. There was recognition that more could be done in schools to highlight the opportunities in these sectors. For example, traditional occupations such as welders are still needed as part of innovative technology and to maximise production.
11. Although research and innovation are fundamental, moving to production at quality and scale would lead to more jobs and growth in the area. In a discussion about the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the site (6000 jobs and an increase in Scotland's manufacturing sector by £535 million in GVA a year), Members asked about the confidence in the number of jobs that will be created. It was confirmed that the standard economic model of number of jobs per square foot irrespective of type of business was used. A masterplan has been developed for proposed commercial development which includes figures suggesting significant economic impact for Glasgow, Scotland and the UK.
12. On the challenges of longer-term worker retention at the site, it is considered the combination of having a talent pipeline, the right culture and an innovation eco-system would contribute to addressing the issue.

Funding is one element but access to talent is also key to keeping jobs in the area - these jobs are “sticky jobs, highly specialised, so difficult to move once here”. AMIDS is competing with sites in England rather than with other areas of Scotland.

Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (MMIC)

13. MMIC is in its seventh year of operation. It was anticipated that the Centre would be moving into its next life cycle, looking at its market position and the redistribution of staffing skills, and reviewing new options and services, for example refocusing on SMEs which form a larger proportion of CPI's traditional business. Construction of the Oligo Manufacturing Innovation Centre of Excellence is now paused and undergoing an optioneering exercise. An economic impact report is due to be issued in September. It was felt that the MMIC had produced tangible results; now life sciences needs to update its manufacturing systems, and there is a need to be strategic about this. MMIC has recently applied for further grant funding awards to support sustainable manufacturing of medicines.

Scaling-up of businesses

14. There are more positive outcomes with start-ups than scale-ups. A lack of support in the manufacturing industry to help businesses to scale-up was highlighted. There is a serious risk associated with scaling a business as it could mean an investment of anything between £20-£100 million, though these investments could provide great growth for the economy. A Scottish Government project to target scaling-up of start-ups would be welcomed. This would help the private sector to be more comfortable with investing.
15. As the properties tend to be large and specialist, Members were concerned that should businesses fail it would be difficult to find a new occupier. There is a degree of acceptance in the sector that some businesses will fail but it is for Scottish Enterprise, in partnership with others, to provide support to ensure this is less likely.
16. The Scottish National Investment Bank was not seen as a possible investor as it is a lender to high-risk businesses rather than “taking companies on a journey through an eco-system”. It was recognised that it is difficult to create and sustain investment districts.

Glasgow City Region Investment Zone

17. Glasgow City Region Investment Zone is one of two investment zones in Scotland. It has £160 million funding over 10 years (capital and revenue) and a focus on advanced manufacturing and precision engineering. There are six proposed capital projects (of around £110m) involving space, semiconductors and maritime.
18. It includes one Tax Site (AMIDS/Glasgow Airport). Members heard that there are five tax incentives available to companies who choose to locate

in the tax site from the £25m allocation. This includes three taxes which are under the responsibility of the UK Government – enhanced capital allowances, enhanced structures and building allowance and employer national insurance contributions relief. The other two taxes are devolved to the Scottish Government – land and buildings transaction tax and non-domestic rates. Members were informed that discussions were ongoing regarding receiving assurances from both governments about responsibility for covering any tax incentives claimed beyond the indicative £25 million allocation

19. It was noted that a tax site must be an under-developed site, existing occupied buildings cannot be included. Conversations about this aspect and the site are ongoing.
20. Members also heard that within defined areas of the Investment Zone, there is an opportunity to establish Non-Domestic Rates Retention (NDRR) sites. Business rates collected above an agreed baseline in these areas can be retained and reinvested within the Zone to support the growth of the advanced manufacturing and precision engineering sectors. The Glasgow City Region, as the Investment Zone Accountable Body, will oversee the pooling and reinvestment of any growth in business rates, guided by a transparent strategy focused on infrastructure, skills, and innovation. A strong case can be made for allocating a significant proportion of these retained rates to AMIDS, where long-term investment is considered critically important.

Scottish Government key policy strands

21. AMIDS approach is a good fit with the Scottish Government's Ambition of Programmes of Action for Scotland's Economy highlighted in its National Strategy for Economic Transformation and Scotland's Innovation Strategy with its focus on energy transition, health and life science, data and digital technologies, as well as advanced manufacturing.
22. It was suggested that an Innovation Tsar is needed to market Scotland's capabilities and that this should be a public sector role, so representations could be made to Westminster. Members noted this role could be undertaken by Scottish Ministers.