

'Now we are all thinking about the challenges we face though the unifying lens of Place.'

**Glasgow's Place Ecosystem**

Glasgow has a very particular ecosystem of people, protagonists and policy which shapes the places of the city.

**People** **Places** **Protagonists** **Policy**

**Living in Glasgow**  
a journey to 2030

**Pictureque upper reaches** **River City** **Bucolic moments**

**PEOPLE make PLACES**

Report to the Glasgow Urbanist

**CITY URBANIST NEXT STEPS**  
INTERNATIONAL CITY METROPOLITAN CITY EVERYDAY CITY

**Facilitating connections across Glasgow's Ecosystem of Place**

- Organizing events, workshops, charrettes
- Connecting, storytelling
- Tracking progress, celebrating success
- Accessing external funding

**Facilitating connections across GCC Depts**

- Contributing to discussions 'Glasgow in the City'
- Facilitating cross-department meetings & initiatives, using place as a way to see challenges & solutions in new ways

**LEVEL 1: SYSTEM FOCUS**

- Building a shared ambition for Glasgow's places
- Encouraging place-based knowledge sharing
- Developing a collective scorecard of place indicators
- Sharing place success stories
- Being politically adopted and bringing place project funding into Glasgow

**LEVEL 2: PROJECT FOCUS: Example** Supporting the transformation of Glasgow's City Centre through stock transfer, with new forms of community engagement to deliver on net zero targets

**LEVEL 3: KNOWLEDGE SHARING** PEOPLE make PLACES DIGITAL REPOSITORY

City Urbanist Projects	Ecosystem Events	Place Stories	Data & Maps	Plans & Policies	Place Commission
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Carefully structured information, organised around audience needs:

# Review of the City Urbanist initiative 2019-2023

Glasgow City Council & Glasgow Urban Lab, Glasgow School of Art

Professor Tom Inns, COFINK LTD.  
JULY 2024

**GLASGOW URBAN LAB**  
THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Geneva UN Charter  
Centre of Excellence  
SMART SUSTAINABLE CITIES

**UNECE**

*'Governments around the world are increasingly seeing cities as being a conduit to mobilising innovation and delivering on policy ... Cities need to get themselves ready for this sort of conversation.'*



This review was undertaken by **Professor Tom Inns, COFINK Ltd.** for the Glasgow Urban Lab, a UNECE Charter Centre of Excellence. Glasgow Urban Lab is a partnership between Glasgow City Council & The Glasgow School of Art.



*'The translation by the City Urbanist of Glasgow's approach to place has been hugely valuable internationally ... not many cities have the ability to communicate what they are doing so clearly'.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an evaluation of Glasgow City Council's (GCC), City Urbanist initiative which ran from January 2019 to March 2023. The review explores the activities undertaken by the postholder, Professor Brian Evans, and the impact they have had on place thinking in Glasgow and beyond. This exploration was informed by interviews, undertaken between Jan – May 2024, with nineteen stakeholders who had engagement with the work of the City Urbanist. Throughout the report comments & quotes from interviewees are shown in **red text**.

- The review demonstrates that the initiative has had significant impact. Glasgow was the first City in the world to appoint a City Urbanist and the way the initiative worked and the insights it generated are of global interest.
- The PEOPLE makes PLACES report, the work of the Place Commission and other tangible outcomes from the initiative such as films, events, design sprints, papers and presentations have been highly valued by many different audiences and have catalysed new ways of thinking about the city.
- With support and connections from the City Urbanist Glasgow's position internationally has been enhanced through its work with the UNECE and its contribution to COP 26.

Less tangibly but of equal significance is the impact the appointment has had on thinking and mindsets across Glasgow's ecosystem of place. The City Urbanist was appointed to act as a 'Grit in the Oyster'. The report describes how place making is now being seen as a way of delivering on broad range of economic, environmental and social challenges by many different actors in GCC and beyond.

The initiative has had its challenges, launching a role like this with no precedent required agility, particularly when the COVID pandemic brought significant disruption to working practices. This review describes lessons learnt and asked interviewees to reflect on what they would prioritise for a second phase of the City Urbanist initiative, should resource become available. The author has synthesised these responses into a set of aims for any continuation. These build on the recommendations made by the City Urbanist in the PEOPLE make PLACES report and the high-level principles of Phase I. Three Levels of future activity are suggested; a SYSTEM FOCUS a PROJECT/PROGRAMME FOCUS and KNOWLEDGE SHARING through a digital repository.

*'A key role like City Urbanist  
should transcend the politics of  
the city.'*

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*'The initiative's place stories really do cement the idea that people make places, you can create the physical space but the life within that space comes from the human activity it inspires.'*

## REPORT STRUCTURE

### The report has 5 sections:

**Section 1** Describes the background to the initiative and provides an overview of the City Urbanist appointment process and establishment of the Place Commission, supported by 8 Place Commissioners.

**Section 2** Reflects on the project work undertaken by the City Urbanist reported in the Place Commission's *PEOPLE make PLACES* report. This begins with the project work that explored Glasgow's places and urban environment through its history and geography, desk research compiling data, trends & policy documents and a series of 16 Place Stories. The report then includes an overview and outcomes from the Place Commission Enquiry which involved two rounds of workshops in 2020 & 2021. An overview of other activities that contributed to the work is also summarised, including, *City Living*, a United Nations Conference held in Sep 2019, *A river runs through it*, a design sprint (charette) exploring the River Clyde held in Sep 2021, *Living in Glasgow: A journey to 2030*, a film describing Glasgow's approach to social and affordable housing completed in Nov 2021, contributions to COP26 in Nov 2021

**Section 3** Explores the interactions between the City Urbanist and senior staff, officers and elected members in GCC and the impact of the appointees work on interactions with external stakeholders. Captures reaction to the *PEOPLE make PLACES* report from a workshop held at the point of publishing in Jan 2023 and from the interviews completed for this review between Jan and May 2024.

**Section 4** Captures reaction to the *PEOPLE make PLACES* report from a workshop held at the point of publishing in Jan 2023 and from the interviews completed for this review between Jan and May 2024.

**Section 5** Speculates on how a Phase 2 of the City Urbanist initiative might be organised based on synthesis of interview comments by the report author.

*'It's always very challenging to evaluate an initiative like this that cuts across policy agendas like sustainability, innovation and inclusion.'*

## SUMMARY OF IMPACT

This report identified six broad areas in which the City Urbanist's work has made a valuable contribution to the work of GCC and the many stakeholders who work in Glasgow's ecosystem of place.

- It has helped frame Glasgow's response to the rapidly evolving place agenda, giving the city a better understanding of its places and urban environment. It has given the city its own place vocabulary and case studies.
- It has emphasised how place decisions impact on the city's social, economic and environmental outcomes. Most importantly it has highlighted how Glasgow needs to embrace more of a systems approach to its place thinking – new levels of collaboration to deliver on a shared ambition are needed more than ever.
- The work has created an up-to-date compendium of place knowledge for Glasgow.
- Internally within GCC, the political commitment to place thinking has given it a higher priority. The City Urbanist has delivered on the role's core aim, to act as a '*Grit in the Oyster*'; achieved by asking questions in new ways and breaking down barriers. This has enabled teams to see the key role place decisions make on the successful delivery of ambitions right across GCC departments.
- It has helped position the city and its place agenda in new ways externally. GCC's dialogue with Scottish Government on place issues has been enhanced. The city has a clearer understanding of its key role in the metropolitan area and the work has raised the profile of its approach to place (particularly in social housing) internationally.
- Finally, the initiative has developed a series of recommendations to further develop place thinking capability and capacity in the city.

*'There's always a danger, that colleagues will see this kind of work as an add on, it's a nice to have ... but this is different, this is an initiative that absolutely needs to be kept to the fore'.*

## SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FOR A PHASE 2

In the PEOPLE make PLACES, 2023 report, seven recommendations were made for further work, 12 months on from the publication of this report, interviewees were asked to suggest how they would define priorities for further development of the City Urbanist initiative if there was an opportunity for a Phase 2.

Section 5 of this report provides a synthesis of these discussions, this interpretation has been developed by the report author who has systematically collated interviewee feedback into an integrated set of potential roles and activities for a Phase 2 appointment.

Interviewees all suggested that any Phase 2 should maintain the high-level principles of Phase 1, notably:

- Delivering *Social, Economic & Environmental outcomes* by encouraging delivery of high-quality places.
- Maintaining independence and freedom to be a '*Grit in the Oyster*' across GCC and city stakeholders.
- Continuing to facilitate thinking across the silos, disciplines, stakeholders and interest groups that influence Glasgow's ecosystem of place

Interviewees also suggested that a Phase 2 would benefit from a more focused set of aims. Synthesising these comments, the author of this report describes how these could be thought of at three levels.

- **LEVEL 1: SYSTEM FOCUS** This would involve the City Urbanist facilitating new approaches, building networks with shared aims, sharing knowledge, collecting data, communicating successes across the city's ecosystem of placemaking actors and protagonists. If successful, this approach would deliver broad collective impact across Glasgow at all its levels.
- **LEVEL 2: PROJECT/PROGRAMME FOCUS** This would pioneer new approaches in one particular part of the city's ecosystem of place. This would require a deep dive into a specific set of issues or location and would aim to deliver direct impact through tangible changes on the ground by piloting a new approach. Possible areas of project/programme focus are described in section 5.
- **LEVEL 3: KNOWLEDGE SHARING** This would continue the process of curating information and building case studies about Glasgow and its place making. In Phase 2 this material would be made available through a digitally accessible repository.

# SECTION I

- BACKGROUND TO THE CITY URBANIST INITIATIVE
- OVERVIEW OF THE CITY URBANIST APPOINTMENT PROCESS
- ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PLACE COMMISSION.

# BACKGROUND TO THE CITY URBANIST INITIATIVE

Before reflecting on the impact and lessons learnt from the City Urbanist initiative it is worth remembering what was going on in Glasgow at the time and how interest in the *Place Agenda* was evolving in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

- The initiative was a manifesto commitment of the incoming Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) administration in 2017. This change in administration was a significant moment for Glasgow politically, as Glasgow City Council and its predecessor, Glasgow District Council, had been under the political control of the Labour Party for the previous 35 years.
- The 2019 – 2023 appointment term of the GCC City Urbanist coincided with significant events within Glasgow, such as COP26.
- The appointment also coincided with the disruption caused by the COVID pandemic. This affected the working practices of GCC staff and other key stakeholders. The ensuing 2020 and 2021 lockdowns also had a big impact on public perception and use of places.

The period before and during the appointment was marked by growing policy interest in the Place Agenda in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

In Scotland, interest in place had been steadily evolving in terms of policy and planning initiatives:

- In 2015 the Scottish Government had launched the *Place Standard Tool*, to provide a framework for place-based conversations to support communities, public, private and third sectors to work together to deliver high quality places.
- In 2018 *The Place Principle*, was adopted by the Scottish Government, COSLA and other partners, highlighting that '*place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities.*'
- Then in 2020 the Scottish Government *Place Standard Strategic Plan* linked these concepts to the 17 UN sustainable Development Goals and Scotland's National Planning Framework (NPF4). This was published in 2021 with a 2045 horizon.

At a UK level key concepts of place had been at the centre of much of the political interest in the Conservative Government's Levelling Up agenda. In 2021 the Johnson administration renamed existing departments to create the The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities explicitly charged with ensuring communities across the UK to thrive, making them great places to live and work. During the period in cities across the UK the place agenda has been informing planning strategy, in 2024, for example, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority published its *Places for Everyone* a long-term plan for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth.

Internationally, the role of the City in driving social, economic and environmental development is now widely recognised. There are many examples of cities which have embraced new approaches to urban planning and decision-making. Many of these cities have been referenced in the PEOPLE make PLACES report that was developed through the City Urbanist Initiative.

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIES

*'Governments around the world are increasingly seeing cities as being a conduit to mobilising innovation and delivering on policy ... Cities need to get themselves ready for this sort of conversation.'*

*'To be seen as investable cities need to be seen as reliable, resilient places. Increasingly investment will require co-operation between sectors, government funding will require public and private sector co-investment.'*

## SCOPING

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **THE 2016 START POINT:**

*'Back in 2016 it didn't feel like there was a clear vision or an intentional approach to development in either the city centre or across the city, it felt like development was being done in a way that was very reactive, rather than proactive ... it seemed the City wasn't working with developers or other owners of assets, or indeed, as an asset owner and developer itself in a way that was working towards clear outcomes.'*

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **SCOPING THE ROLE:**

*'The scoping workshops helped clarify that the City was not looking for a 'Starchitect' but someone with considerable design expertise and proven ability to facilitate conversations and bring people together from different parts of GCC. From the start, however, conventional thinking within the Council was nudging this to be a role that should be put with the development & regeneration department. If there is a next time really prioritising the role of design to create a collaborative culture might not be a bad thing. Emphasising this might suggest locating the role in a different way internally.'*

## INITIAL DISCUSSIONS & MANIFESTO COMMITMENT

In its 2017 Glasgow City Council Manifesto the SNP articulated its intention, if elected, to initiate the appointment of a 'City Architect' for Glasgow. This role had been conceived following a visit made by GCC Leader-to-be, Susan Aitken and her then deputy David MacDonald to Denmark in December 2015. Both were keen to look at new ways Glasgow could think about the design and function of the city, they were struck by the quality of the urban environment and infrastructure in Copenhagen and other Danish cities and had conversations with Stephen Willacy (City Architect for Aarhus) and Tina Saaby (City Architect for Copenhagen) to explore how a City Architect appointment could have influence on a city.

## SCOPING THE ROLE

In May 2017, the SNP were elected to lead GCC. Following appointment of this new leadership group, a series of workshops and discussions were organised with support from Architecture & Design Scotland (A&DS) to scope the city ambitions for the role of City Architect for Glasgow. The workshops emphasised the potential of design to help convene conversations across the Council and the City using space and spatial concepts to bring people together. The idea of different parts of GCC working together more for the benefit of the people of Glasgow was welcomed. From the outset the role was set as a fixed term external consultancy role rather than as a member of staff within the Council.

## RECRUITMENT

In the autumn of 2018, the Chief Executive's office at GCC began the process of recruiting and appointing a 'City Architect'. This was advertised as a 2-day a week appointment over 3 years.

## POSITIONING IN GCC

The role was framed as an independent advisor to the Council and senior officers, reporting to the GCC Chief Executive on contract, progress and budget issues. This positioning was maintained throughout the appointment, although the Chief Executive did delegate administrative and other support for the role to other officer functions within GCC.

# APPOINTMENT PROCESS

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **THE TITLE CITY URBANIST:**

*'The term City Urbanist was actually more fitting to the role's aims, because it wasn't just buildings, we were thinking about, it was very much about that wider urban realm and the way that Glasgow's built environment interacts with citizens and visitors to the city.'*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **THE ONBOARDING PROCESS**

*'I think it's probably fair to say that there was a process of trial and error with Council officers to find the sweet spot as to how they could work with an independent advisor in this new way – it was a very new thing for the city and everybody had to find their way through it'.*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **THE PANDEMIC**

*'Due to challenges like the pandemic the role didn't have as much visibility with elected members of the Council as it might have had, when there was visibility there was great interest, but ultimately it was not wide enough, to get stickability, in the city you do need political awareness, understanding and buy-in'*

## THE TITLE 'CITY URBANIST'

Professor Brian Evans was appointed to the role in January 2019. On his appointment Brian (an urban designer and landscape architect) suggested the term city urbanist was more appropriate to the brief the city had drafted and avoided the misuse of the legally protected word architect."

## BEGINNINGS OF 'PLACE' VOCABULARY

At his interview and on appointment Brian was able to lay out his vision for the City Urbanist role. He brought with him, some key vocabulary and place concepts that then had a significant influence on the work completed whilst in post. He suggested establishing a *Place Commission*, with *Place Commissioners* and introduced the concept of Glasgow operating as an *International, Metropolitan City* and *Everyday City*.

## ESTABLISHING OPERATING PRINCIPLES

There was a role specification for the 'City Urbanist', this emphasised the postholder's function as an independent strategic advisor across a wide range of activities. As part of the role Professor Brian Evans also committed to the establishment of the Place Commission (described in more detail on page 6). Some of the practical challenges associated with establishing this new role are described below:

- The role description didn't lay out in detail how the post holder would interact with different stakeholders and processes within GCC and the level of influence the postholder would have with external stakeholders. These interactions and relationships were worked out 'on the hoof'.
- On appointment it took time to position Brian's role within the activities of GCC, because at this point in 2019, a number of senior officer posts in GCC in departments associated with development, regeneration & planning were unfilled.
- Just as an understanding of the working principles of the City Urbanist role was emerging the pandemic brought significant disruption to working practices and disrupted plans to communicate the role more clearly to external audiences through events, lectures and in-person public conversations.

INTERVIEWEE QUOTES:  
**BRIAN EVANS AS CITY  
URBANIST**

*'Brian brought a wealth of connection and experience with the broader ecosystem around place ... he was able to draw upon, the accumulated capital that he's built, through many years of working across the world to connect the city in new ways'*

*'Brian brought us curiosity and openness'.*

**OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS**

- A number of interviewees commented on how the role had no formal responsibility for evaluating and determining planning decisions and no formal line of reporting into any of the democratically elected committees of the Council. This was seen as both a strength and a weakness and is discussed at many points in this report.
- Some interviewees suggested that the role was not as widely advertised, particularly in industry facing publications and recruitment sites as it might have been. In any future iteration it would be useful to publicise the role more widely and have a clearer statement of its scope. This would potentially encourage a wider group of candidates to apply.
- There was some discussion about how job adverts like this should be framed, to what extent does the City want to appoint somebody with their own ambition and vision for the City or somebody who is going to facilitate and develop the narrative of others, getting this balance right seems to be critically important.
- All interviewees were supportive of the shift to the title of 'City Urbanist'. It was a pragmatic decision but more importantly really did capture the urgency of addressing a wider range of social, economic & environmental issues that are impacted on by place making decisions in the City and not just decisions about buildings.
- Likewise, the *Place* vocabulary that came with Brian's appointment was also welcomed as it was seen as a way for Glasgow to own these concepts which were being talked about by many in government on its own terms.
- Many respondees commented that within GCC clearer briefing on the remit and reporting structures associated with the role would have been extremely helpful as Professor Evans took up post.
- Everybody recognised that the pandemic did disrupt the City Urbanist's work. It was felt that the pandemic did slow the start of the activities, particularly the launch of the concept to external audiences, it also impeded internal visibility particularly with elected members. It was noted, however, that the initiative was very quick to adapt to a more consultative research-orientated role, enabled through online dialogue.

# PLACE COMMISSION

## PLACE COMMISSIONERS:

### **Professor Brian Evans**

*Glasgow City Urbanist  
(Convenor)*

### **Jude Barber**

*Director/Architect, Collective  
Architecture*

### **Dr Linda de Caestecker**

*Director of Public Health,  
NHSGCC*

### **Professor Carol Tannahill**

*Director, Glasgow Centre for  
Population Health  
(19/20 only)*

### **Ann Allen**

*Director of Estates, University  
of Glasgow*

### **Kevin Kane**

*Executive Director, Glasgow  
Economic Leadership*

### **Charles Campion**

*Partner, JTP*

### **Rachel Tennant**

*Chair of Landscape Institute  
Scotland*

### **Brian Veitch**

*Independent Consulting  
Engineer*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:

### PLACE COMMISSION

*'Brian's curating of the Place Commission membership was a real demonstration of his ability to develop a triple helix approach weaving together thinking from private practice, academia and the city. Brian really understood how each one had something to bring to the place agenda. This seems so key in breaking down silos.'*

## PLACE COMMISSION ESTABLISHED

- Following his appointment as City Urbanist, Brian Evans worked with key stakeholders in GCC and the city to set-up the Place Commission, defining both its remit and a team of Place Commissioners.
- In September 2019, a prospectus for the Place Commission was published framing the activity as *'An opportunity to open up discussion and engage with the relationship between people, place, and design in the city.'* The prospectus described the aims of the Place Commission as being to *'generate a clear, cohesive narrative to influence the direction of Glasgow's development and champion a place-based design approach'*.
- The prospectus introduced the Place Commissioners described as *'Individuals from a range of design and development backgrounds, recognised as experts in their field interested in the topics under enquiry and open to new ways of thinking about the city and to listen to people's perspectives'*.
- It is also laid out an invitation to get involved and the structure of the consultation: *'The Place Commission will enquire into the relationship between People, Place, and Design through the themes of the Everyday City, the Metropolitan City, and the International City.* The prospectus highlighted how the commission, *'would like to hear from people interested in contributing their thoughts and evidence to this integrated thinking.*
- A detailed timeline was described with 3 consultation sessions running from Oct–Dec 2019, Jan-Mar 2020 and Apr-Jun 2020 with the Place Commission Report being completed in Sep 2020.
- Logistics delayed the start of this consultation process and then in early 2020 the COVID pandemic interrupted plans to hold face-to-face meetings and workshops. A revised engagement strategy was developed that led to sixteen 90-minute online workshops organised in two rounds of discussion with commissioners and other stakeholders, between Oct 2020 and March 2021.
- The findings from these two phases of engagement and other background research was documented in an interim report to GCC Council and participants and formed a significant part of the evidence base for the PEOPLE make PLACES report published in January 2023.

# PLACE COMMISSION

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: PLACE COMMISSION

*'The ambition was to bring in the voice of the real citizens of Glasgow, unfortunately the pandemic got in the way of planned sessions with communities.'*

*'As a group of commissioners we never really found our collective voice because delays and then the pandemic got in the way of real conversation and exchange of ideas.'*

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

- Interviewees saw value in the idea of a Place Commission supported by Place Commissioners. This was seen to expand the reach and engagement with the place debate in the city.
- Clearly the pandemic did disrupt the plans laid out in the Place Commission's September 2019 Prospectus, but interviewees were very positive about the online work that was done by the City Urbanist to support the Place Commission Enquiry in 2020 and 2021.
- It was suggested that the remit given to the Place Commission process were very broad, ie 'Opening up a conversation' and 'generating a clear cohesive narrative to influence change'. Some interviewees felt this was right approach as the city needed to move through a 'Discovery' process before more focused objectives could be defined, other interviewees felt the Place Commission could have been given a clearer set of tasks. It was suggested that other commission style entities that have been set-up in the city (like the Connectivity Commission) had a clearer set of objectives at the outset.
- Respondents thought there could have been a clearer reporting structure into GCC officers and elected members and other stakeholders in the city.
- The governance relationship between the Place Commissioners and City Urbanist was questioned, some interviewees suggested that as it was an independent Advisory Group, one of the Place Commissioners might have chaired the group rather the City Urbanist. The City Urbanist could have reported progress against a project plan to the group. The group could then have provided oversight and strategic guidance to the City Urbanist role.
- The PEOPLE make PLACES report does make lots of recommendations for bringing in the voice of Glasgow's citizens and communities into the city's place conversations – yet this wasn't really achieved in the Place Commission's work. A number of people did respond to the September 2019's prospectus invitation to get involved, but this response was mainly limited to professionals with an interest in Glasgow's built environment. The pandemic prevented any real direct community input into the group's work. Any future iteration of the City Urbanist role could define a much clearer process for engaging with Glasgow's citizens.
- It was noted that despite the convening challenges of the pandemic Brian Evans had maintained communications, reaching out to commissioners at an individual level to keep them up to speed with developments and seeking input to drafts of the Place Commission Enquiry workshops and report as they evolved.

# SECTION 2

- REFLECTION ON THE **PEOPLE make PLACES** REPORT
- PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY ROUND 1
- PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY ROUND 2
- FINDINGS
- OTHER ACTIVITIES INFORMING THE INITIATIVE

## REFLECTION ON THE PEOPLE make PLACES REPORT

A key outcome from the the City Urbanist's work during the 2019-2023 period was the PEOPLE make PLACES report, published in Jan 2023. This section reflects on the contents of this report which was informed by a series of different research initiatives and consultations undertaken by the City Urbanist including:

1. Desk research to identify and review published material
2. A programme of data collection and analysis
3. A review of the place policy landscape at the Scottish, city region and city level
4. An enquiry programme involving two rounds of workshops to explore the condition of, and prospects for, Glasgow's places from a wide range of perspectives.
5. A series of workshops, charrettes and other events that have helped synthesise learning from this material.

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: VALUE FOR MONEY

*'If you think through the volume of work in the PEOPLE make PLACES report, there are over a dozen case studies, reporting on a whole series of workshops and discussions, there are new maps and data and probably one of the most comprehensive guides available describing plans and strategies that influence place decision making in the City. This is a compendium of knowledge that one person on a 2 day a week contract would never normally develop, this package represents incredible value for money for the Council.'*

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: BEING DIGITALLY ACCESSIBLE

*'The PEOPLE make PLACES publication is great if you have a physical copy. It is such a shame it's not a web resource, there are so many people who would benefit from that knowledge. They need it online as a searchable and constantly updated resource.'*

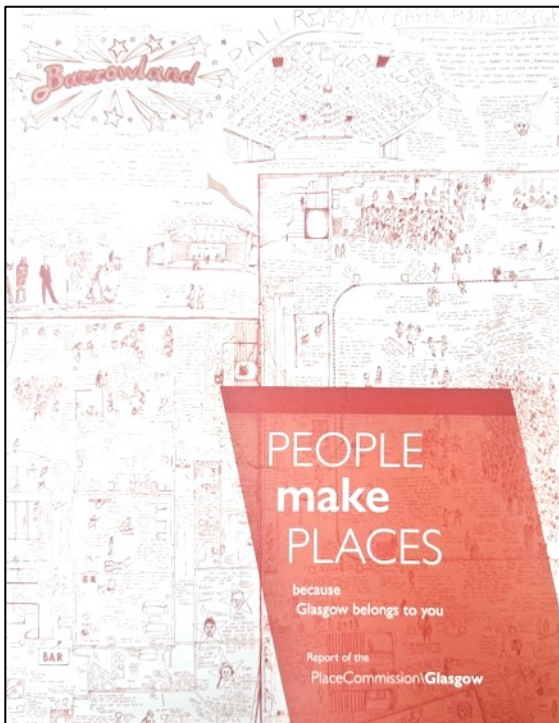


Figure 1  
**THE FRONT COVER OF THE  
'PEOPLE make PLACES' report**

The front cover of this 200 page report featured a Dialectogram entitled 'Barrowland' created by illustrator Mitch Miller.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **PLACE LANGUAGE & CONCEPTS**

*By naming the report PEOPLE make PLACES 'because Glasgow belongs to you'. The work does really tie into the parlance of Glasgow'*

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **GLASGOW'S 3 LAYERS**

*'Everybody knows we should be engaging with communities and citizens when making decisions about our places. The model of International, Metropolitan and Everyday helps understanding of why people might have quite different perspectives on developments in the city.'*

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: **METROPOLITAN CITY**

*'Nobody has ever encapsulated the meaning of Glasgow as a metropolitan city, a city at the heart of Scotland's biggest metro region as clearly as the Place Commission report does. This has given GCC's leadership the narrative to talk about Glasgow's metropolitan role and has enabled the city to get this key position acknowledged at a Scottish & UK government level for the first time.'*

*'In the past it was always Glasgow and a big wall around it ... There is now much more engagement from Glasgow and leadership with the regional agenda, the two are completely interconnected.'*

### **PLACE LANGUAGE AND CONCEPTS**

The PEOPLE make PLACES report begins by discussing why place matters in Glasgow and reviews the growing body of evidence that place quality can deliver economic, social and environmental value. Real world examples and evidence from Glasgow helps unpack these concepts, connections and language with clarity.

### **OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS**

- Interview respondents commended this part of the report for the way it helped articulate Glasgow's understanding of place on its own terms, so that it could influence Scotland's approach and engage in international debate on this key topic.

### **GLASGOW'S 3 LAYERS: INTERNATIONAL, METROPOLITAN & EVERYDAY CITY**

The PEOPLE make PLACES report systematically unpacks the complexity of Glasgow. Like every city it has many layers that create different ways to see the city. To help understand this complexity the report robustly evidenced the idea that Glasgow can be seen as:

- An *International City* with connections globally - servicing the need of visitors from around the world.
- A *Metropolitan City* with key relationships with neighbouring authorities and the role of 'regional anchor tenant' – servicing the needs of commuters, shoppers and stakeholders from outside the city.
- An *Everyday City* always collaborating with local communities – servicing the needs of citizens living, working and being educated and cared for in the city.

### **OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS**

- Many interviewees commented on how useful describing Glasgow as *International, Metropolitan and Everyday city* has been in terms of organising priorities internally but also collaborating externally.
- The work on Glasgow role as a *Metropolitan City* has been particularly timely and significant as the concept of Metro Mayors has become more important across the UK. Historically Glasgow has sometimes had limited interaction with neighbouring local authorities. Now with more funding being allocated on a regional basis, really understanding the issues of place that need to be tackled through regional partnership has become increasingly important.
- The significance of the Metropolitan area was also highlighted in the River runs through it Design Sprint held in September 2021. This workshop explored the way so many natural resources that have an impact on Glasgow require careful oversight and planning at a regional level.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: UNDERSTANDING HISTORY

*'If you landed in Glasgow with no understanding of its history you would find it very confusing. How can a city end up with a motorway running through its centre? Why does a city have so many gap sites?. Having such a clear and concise overview of history is invaluable.'*

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: PLACE STORIES

*'The place stories really do cement the idea that people make places, you can create the physical space but the life within that space comes from the human activity it inspires.'*

### THE FOUR ERAS OF MODERN GLASGOW

The report contains a concise history that describes the evolution of modern Glasgow in four eras of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialisation, de-industrialisation and modernism in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, later 20<sup>th</sup> century regeneration and a 21<sup>st</sup> century recovery towards transition and renaissance.

### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interview respondents commented on how the report's history section highlights how Glasgow's transformation journey never ceases. It was noted how pivotal understanding history is in understanding the Glasgow of today.
- It was very notable how despite progress on many fronts, the current period is still very challenging for the city and its places, productivity needs to increase, stretching net zero targets must be met, health, education and economic gaps still need to be closed, all whilst GCC itself is financially squeezed.
- Respondents noted how the report clearly articulates the place dimension within all these challenges alongside the need to work in new ways.
- The concise history developed in the report played an important part in structuring the film: *Living in Glasgow: A journey to 2030*, launched at COP26 in November 2021.

### GLASGOW PLACE STORIES

Throughout the report a series of sixteen illustrated *Place Stories* have been used to illustrate real example of projects and place interactions with the people of Glasgow.

### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interviewees commented on how helpful the Glasgow Place Stories were in illustrating key points raised in the report. Examples were given of how the stories have since been used to illustrate other reports and presentations.
- The Glasgow Place Stories were also useful in emphasising the place activity that happens at a grass roots level in the city, initiatives that sometimes go unreported. It was noted how much of Glasgow's current narrative is framed around 'big' events, the Commonwealth Games etc, giving more exposure to ongoing community stories, rather than one-off events could help reshape the city's narrative.
- The people element in each story was very clear, cementing the report's key message that *'people make places'* in Glasgow.

# BACKGROUND RESEARCH

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: PLANS, POLICIES & STRATEGIES

*'It's only when you see this all listed out in this way that you really realise how complicated we have made things in Glasgow. It would be so great to know where the one agreed definitive statement on the city's future vision for its places actually sits.'*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: MAPS, TRENDS, DATA & FACTS

*'You can't pretend Glasgow's not complex, having such a comprehensive set of maps all together in one place allows you to peer into the city through different lenses. It helps you see how valuable a place perspective is in understanding relationships between health, economy, transport and green spaces.'*

## LISTING OF PLANS, POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The PEOPLE make PLACES report contains a detailed appendix that systematically lists over 350 formal documents that have an influence on Glasgow's place agenda. The listing describes:

- The level of the document as National (Scottish), Regional, City (Glasgow) or Area (part of Glasgow).
- The author of the document as ScotGov, Independent, Specific Entity (SportScotland etc), GCC etc.
- The nature of the document, whether it is Plan, Policy, Strategy, Workstream, Appraisal, Supplementary Guidance, Legal, review Report or Heritage Trail information.
- Finally, the scope of the document, for example: Transport & Infrastructure, Housing, Economy, City Centre, Planning, Communities etc.

A selection of these are then listed under different themes at city region and Glasgow levels. Finally an overview of some of the most significant documents and relevant urls is provided.

## MAPS, TRENDS, DATA & FACTS

The PEOPLE make PLACES report contains a detailed set of maps that help locate Glasgow within the region, communicating: relationships to the primary urban area, the city region, health boards and HSCPs, the river system, levels of derelict land, the green network, levels of home retrofitting, active travel networks, geography of locality plans and neighbourhoods, the location of the report's *Place Stories*. There are also detailed summaries of demographic data, economic trends and benchmark data with other UK and international cities.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Many interviewees commented on the value of this repository of documents, the sheer volume of documentation is indicative of how much of the policy landscape has a place component, but also how overwhelming this can be when decision-making.
- Some respondents reflected on the amount of resource that must be consumed in creating all this documentation, particularly when many documents are cross-referenced, this must represent a huge overhead for Glasgow's ecosystem of place.
- The repository had been useful for individual projects that had required careful policy scaffolding, it was noted that this overview doesn't actually exist anywhere else.
- It was also noted how this information will have a half-life, the summary was collated before Jan 2023 and many new documents have now been published.

# PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY ROUND 1

## THE PLACE COMMISSION ROUND 1 CONVERSATIONS

Round 1 of engagement with key stakeholders explored Glasgow's place-based challenges through 11 topics:

- Place principles
- Economy & enterprise
- The climate emergency
- Community engagement
- Culture, heritage & culture
- Health & wellbeing
- Place hierarchy: city centre, suburbs & localities
- Housing & the home
- Education & learning
- Connections: smart, digital transport
- The public realm

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: THE PLACE COMMISSION ROUND 1 CONVERSATIONS

*'Creating a neutral space for place conversations where everybody's equal, everybody can speak and everybody can connect to exchange information is very important because it creates innovation'*

*'Establishing the trust to do this with such diverse actors is challenging, you need somebody with the right personality to do this, Brian achieved this.'*

*'Some voices were missing particularly the citizens of Glasgow.'*

## PLACE COMMISSION\GLASGOW'S ENQUIRY ROUND 1

At the heart of the Place Commission's 'PEOPLE make PLACES' report is a synthesis of the discussion and findings from the Place Commission Enquiry which explored the dilemmas, challenges and opportunities confronting Glasgow's ecosystem of place.

Round 1 of the Place Commission Enquiry process involved eleven online, 90-minute, workshops exploring place-based challenges through eleven topics. At each session between 6 – 12 participants (all key stakeholders from inside and outside the city) explored how well Glasgow was responding to the theme under investigation. Across all workshops recurring themes were:

- The complex landscape of current and pending, concepts, strategies & plans, at multiple levels, with different timescales, that influence the planning and design of place in Glasgow.
- The need to learn from and celebrate the aspects of regeneration & renewal that Glasgow is good at. (Multi-partner, long-term initiatives like Clyde Gateway and the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership, housing, securing flagship initiatives, levels of HE & FE, commercial and public sector investment, the city's heritage and spirit and engagement initiatives).
- Place deficits and challenges that confront all cities (Covid legacy & the climate emergency) and those that are particular to Glasgow. (Ingrained inequalities, legacy of post-war planning, regional governance structures, economic challenges & transport).
- Where Glasgow should go for inspiration, to benchmark, to learn and to collaborate, but being wary of 'copying and pasting' from elsewhere.
- How Glasgow should innovate and transform its approach to place. In particular, turning to face challenges, develop a long-term vision, break down silos, reflect on boundaries, use Covid as a pivot.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interview respondents commented on the efficiency of the Place Commission Enquiry online process.
- Many noted it was the first time that a very broad conversation about the city had been facilitated for many years, this did catalyse new ideas and helped participants see new perspectives.
- For many it really bought home how place planning and place interventions had impact across so many different interconnected agendas.
- It also highlighted both the genuine challenge of joining up thinking and how the system had made this even more complicated by running so many multiple strategies, plans and policies simultaneously.
- The need to broaden the diversity of consultees in this sort of process in the future was noted, in particular: having a wider demographic (background, age, gender & ethnicity), enabling community/user participation, ensuring commercial representation & involving even wider disciplinary perspectives.

# PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY ROUND 2

## THE PLACE COMMISSION ROUND 2 CONVERSATIONS

Round 2 of engagement with key stakeholders reflected on findings from round 1 with a focus on translating ambitions into action. At each session participants were asked to reflect on:

- What could Glasgow achieve if the city was brave?
- What would the next steps for Glasgow be?
- By 2030 what would Glasgow wish it had done at the beginning of the decade?

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: THE PLACE COMMISSION ROUND 2 CONVERSATIONS

*'The thinking coming out of Round 2 conversations was still very high-level, if they had been less generalised it would be easier to see how interventions could be made.'*

*'I think we all saw that what we need is system-shift. We all need to look up and see the system and think in new ways.'*

## PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY ROUND 2

Findings from Round 1 of the Place Commission Enquiry were synthesised and used to inform Round 2 of discussions, this involved five online, 90-minute, workshops exploring outcomes from the initial sessions. Across these workshops recurring themes were:

- How important it was to recognise that different people view Glasgow in very different ways.
- How place impacts across many agendas, each carries equal weight as the city heads towards 2030.
- How much more can be done to share experiences across silos internally within the city and with external partner cities.
- How there is no silver bullet, success will come from the collective impact of a wide range of initiatives of varied scale with shared ambitions, but these need some level of co-ordination and interactions with each other.
- Shared indicators of progress are required.
- The important role Glasgow plays as the anchor tenant in the region.
- Concerted action is needed at different scales, bottom-up must be valued just as much as top-down.
- Existing skills and expertise in the city need to be connected in new ways, new skills need to be acquired to facilitate this.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

- Participants involved in earlier workshops welcomed the fact that these hadn't been a one-off process, comments and outcomes from round 1 had been synthesised and used to build a platform for round 2 discussions.
- It was very useful for participants to work together in the round 2 sessions and co-discover the complexity of Glasgow's challenges, but also the common ground. Everybody has a shared interest that all actors in Glasgow's ecosystem of place work to shared aims, sharing knowledge and building capability and capacity for transformation in the city.
- The round 2 conversations highlighted the gap between planning and doing, interviewees commented on the value of having the conversations but the need to now translate these insights into real projects and action.
- Both Round 1 and Round 2 discussions highlighted that there is a need to work in a new way, taking more of a systems approach to place making. Many interviewees commented on the value of the Glasgow Place Ecosystem diagram (shown in Figure 2).
- It was noted that a significant proportion of investment in urban development projects in the city are initiated by private and public sector bodies, recent examples include the Barclays Campus, the City's university-led innovation districts, there are then a myriad of other commercial entities associated with student housing, retail and private sector housing. It was suggested that more mapping and engagement with these interests could be useful for the City, this could be a route for translating concepts and ideas into interventions on the ground.



# FINDINGS

## FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH, PLACE COMMISSION ENQUIRY & OTHER ACTIVITIES

The PEOPLE make PLACES report listed out 10 findings from the different strands of research work, rounds 1 and 2 of the Place Commission Enquiry and insights drawn from the other activities that had supported the initiative. These are detailed in the report, in summary they included:

1. A definition of Place Value based on Health, Social, Economic & Environmental Outcomes
2. A clear description of Glasgow's place history and a reminder of the connection between degradation of the urban environment and inequalities and the continuing need to address this issue in Glasgow.
3. Acknowledgment that silo thinking is still prevalent and that a system thinking approach would add considerable value.
4. An initial diagrammatic representation of Glasgow's ecosystem of place and an outline of how this might be used to harness collective impact, by:
  - Developing understanding of shared ambitions.
  - Building knowledge through collective learning.
  - Creating shared approaches to measurement of impact.
  - Initiating new approaches to communication.
5. Confirmation that looking at Glasgow through the lenses of *International*, *Metropolitan* and *Everyday* was helpful in understanding the city and articulating connections between activities at different levels.
6. Recognition that there are dozens if not hundreds of place projects taking place across Glasgow at any one time, some conceived as top-down initiatives, others as bottom-up. Some are multi-agency and partnership driven, some are local and community driven. Every project has a critically important relationship with the people it serves.
7. A clear listing of the challenges that remain for Glasgow, notably: decarbonisation, sustainable transport, climate action, nature recovery, vacant & derelict land, educational attainment & skills, social justice, health and wellbeing.
8. The need to learn from Glasgow. Through the PEOPLE make PLACES project work key areas where Glasgow leads the way were identified as area-based regeneration, cultural regeneration and the creative community and social and affordable housing.
9. Distillation of lessons learnt from these initiatives highlighted the importance of effective governance and community engagement, but also the need to shift up a gear and begin to take a more joined up approach.
10. Overcoming, Glasgow's patchy and sometimes unfocused approach to place making by helping everybody see the bigger picture and how place making principles can be applied more consistently at all levels of thinking in the city, whilst mobilising the skills and energy of communities by sharing learning and stories of success.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES INFORMING THE INITIATIVE

### UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE: CITY LIVING

International Conference: September 2019

Professor Brian Evans first established a working relationship with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in 2015 when the Glasgow Urban Lab, a partnership between GCC and the Glasgow School of Art was awarded UN Charter Centre for Excellence status.

Building on these connections, in September 2019, Professor Brian Evans brought the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) *City Living* Conference to Glasgow. This was organised by the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management in partnership with GCC the Academy of Urbanism and the Glasgow Urban Lab & UN Charter Centre both at the Glasgow School of Art and the Glasgow City-Region Partnership. The Conference discussed progress in achieving access to affordable housing for all in the UNECE region, a particular focus was Glasgow's role in the UK as a best practice of community and managed housing.



Figure 3,4,5 & 6

### IMAGES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE: CITY LIVING

# OTHER ACTIVITIES INFORMING THE INITIATIVE

## A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT – DESIGN SPRINT

Design Sprint (Charrette): September 2021

In September 2021, a group of over sixty stakeholders, designers, students and public sector professionals collaborated on a two-day design sprint (charrette), Facilitated by Professor Brian Evans working with the Urban C:Lab (Buro Happold), the Urban Lab (Glasgow School of Art), Architecture and Design Scotland, and GCC.

The collective aim was to explore and reimagine the future of the Clyde Valley and the Glasgow City Region. Over the two days, the following themes and issues emerged:

- An understanding that the Clyde is a complex system of tributaries that plays a key role in addressing many issues, including, water resources and flooding, ecology, open space and health, mobility and economic opportunity, inclusion and community integration.
- Administrative boundaries, don't reflect complex systems like this.
- To deliver the most benefit, efficiently, its whole risk and potential need to be recognised and managed as a system.
- Delivering change in such a complex system could be delivered by a programme of small projects rather than looking for mega projects.
- Sharing knowledge and coming together to make decisions is critical to successfully driving resilience.
- Establishing a mechanism to support working in this way would be hugely beneficial both for the Clyde and other complex systems that make up Glasgow and its metropolitan area.

### DAY 1

### SYSTEMS & INTERACTIONS

Each group was provided a different combination of maps, each capturing a number of layered systems - hydrological, ecological, environmental, social, economic, movement and infrastructures:

#### Green & blue infrastructure

Rivers, tributaries and green space (parkland and wooded areas)



#### Built up area & topography

Built up areas and topography



#### Economy

Employment density (jobs per KM2), employment change, strategic centres and economic locations



#### Transport

Key transport networks (roads, railways and subway lines)



#### Flood risk

Predicted effects of flooding (coastal, river and surface water)



#### Derelict & vacant land

Derelict and vacant land, including adjacent 'buffer zones'.



#### Population

Population density (residents per KM2) and deprivation (SIMD)



#### Governance

Local authority boundaries



#### Places along the Clyde



Corn Linn  
The Fall Line

New Lanark  
First Industry

Blantyre - Water Power  
& A River Wide Weir

Into the East End  
Clyde Gateway

Through the City to  
the Firth

Urban River  
Tidal Weir

Clyde Cart  
Confluence

Clydebank and the  
Erskine Bridge

River Kelvin

Estuarine Firth at  
Dumbarton

Picturesque upper reaches

River City

Bucolic moments

Figure 7

## MATERIALS FROM THE A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT DESIGN SPRINT

## OTHER ACTIVITIES INFORMING THE INITIATIVE

### SUPPORT FOR GCC's CONTRIBUTION TO COP26

Presentations & Events: 31<sup>st</sup> October – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

COP26 came to Glasgow in early November 2021 and Professor Brian Evans was involved in a wide range of discussions and presentations working with UNECE contacts and the GCC leadership team. *Living in Glasgow: A Journey to 2030* was shown for the first time at this forum and was praised for the way it succinctly explained Glasgow's approach to the development of environmentally sustainable social housing.

### **LIVING IN GLASGOW: A JOURNEY TO 2030**

Film: November 2021

In the autumn of 2021 Professor Brian Evans used initial findings from the Place Commission Enquiry and other recent research to help structure a 16-minute film entitled *Living in Glasgow: A Journey to 2030*. This presented the story of Glasgow's changing approach to social and affordable housing in the 20th and 21st centuries and the development of the city's housing association movement. The city's approaches to dealing with the contemporary challenge of decarbonisation and opportunities brought through adoption of the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods were also explored. The film was prepared for showing at COP 26 in November 2021 and has been widely used as part of many other conferences and presentations.



Figure 8  
**SCREENSHOTS FROM: *LIVING IN GLASGOW***

# SECTION 3

REFLECTIONS ON THE CITY URBANIST'S INTERACTIONS:

- INTERNALLY WITH GCC STAKEHOLDERS
- WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
- ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER AUDIENCES

# INTERACTIONS WITH GCC STAKEHOLDERS

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: WORKING INTERNALLY WITH GCC STAKEHOLDERS

*'When we (GCC) were working our way through complex planning discussions, it was very useful having somebody to help us ask the right questions'*

*'The Council are now talking about place being more than urban design in the traditional sense of the word'.*

*'The empowerment provided by the City Urbanist has given confidence to key individuals in the Council to understand and talk about place as a determinant of outcomes in so many things. The impact of place on health, economic and environmental outcomes is now widely discussed in a way it wasn't 6 years ago. This positions Glasgow as a leader in Scotland the UK and globally, it's remarkable that Glasgow has begun to shift its thinking in such a short space of time.'*

*'The City Urbanist was convening conversations in this giant bureaucracy that simply wouldn't have happened before.'*

*'It has demonstrated the power of design in convening internal conversations using place and spatial concepts to bring people together. We can now see that you could use design to create a more collaborative culture in the Council.'*

One of the original ambitions for the City Urbanist appointment was to act as a 'Grit in the Oyster'. During his tenure, Professor Brian Evans' interacted with many elected members and officers within GCC contributing to meetings, working groups and projects in a wide variety of ways.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Many interviewees commented on the way Professor Brian Evans had acted as a critical friend (the grit-in-the-oyster originally outlined in the City Architect proposal). This was described as:
  - Shifting mindsets by asking the right question at the right time
  - Opening minds by suggesting external examples
- It was also highlighted how he helped take the Place Principle and other generic place initiatives (20-minute neighbourhoods) that were circulating during the period – and translate them into a Glasgow Context. Internally (within GCC) this has given teams the confidence to respond thoughtfully, not just blindly responding to new concepts
- It was noted how Professor Brian Evans had broadened the conversation about the significance of place across GCC – 'Place' is now much more part of the agenda for all departments. Place is acting as a conduit (and way of exchanging) ideas and interventions across different departments.
- Interviewees explained that against a backdrop of budget cuts that put stress on the system people become very time challenged and the opportunity to work across silos is diminished, having a facilitator like Professor Brian Evans in the system was valued.
- At the beginning of the initiative there were staff working in different directorates of GCC who had not connected their activities into the agenda of Place. Through discussions, Brian was able to communicate the implications of place in a wide range of policy issues and the need to see the city and places through a systems lens. The impact of place initiatives are seen more holistically, places help take a systems level view of impacts.
- The political Commitment to the City Urbanist role from the City Leader had demonstrated very high-level political commitment to place internally within GCC. Internally staff with a place remit found this very motivating.
- It was noted that there could have been more engagement with elected members.

*'Most people don't really have a clue about what place means ... Brian was able to insert himself into conversations and ask questions to nudge thinking about place and design ... this has shifted conversations, we can see the glue that place thinking brings to Council decision-making.'*

*'We know that 20-minute neighbourhoods might be a good idea ... but what do they actually mean for somewhere like Glasgow. The City Urbanist acted as a very useful sounding board to test whether ideas might work in Glasgow but also as an advocate within the city.'*

# INTERACTIONS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: WORKING WITH DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS

*'For me, as an architect working with external developers coming into the City, it was incredibly helpful to have a point of contact to help my team navigate planning and policy making in Glasgow.'*

*'There was real value in having somebody we (GCC) trusted involved in planning discussions with external development stakeholders, particularly encouraging them to think more holistically about their projects'.*

## 'INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: GLASGOW'S POSITIONING IN THE METROPOLITAN REGION

*'Now City of Glasgow is positioning itself as the 'anchor authority' in the region, Brian has given us the maps, data and narrative to support this position.'*

*'Although Glasgow is not formally a metro region in the way that Greater Manchester and the West Midlands are, direct UK government funding is still directed to the city because we can very confidently talk about ourselves as not just a city region, but a metro region.'*

GCC works with many different stakeholders, through the review interview process different ways that the City Urbanist added value to these relationships were described.

## DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS

Developments in Glasgow involve many stakeholders working with a wide range of architectural, planning, housing and development teams. Processes do exist to allow these teams to have early conversations about proposals with GCC and others in the city. For example, the *Glasgow Urban Design Panel (GURP)* hosted and facilitated by GCC as an *'independent design review panel for the city, for reviewing selected projects for voluntary review'* in partnership with the Glasgow Institute of Architects (GIA) and the Glasgow Civic Forum (GCF). During their appointment the City Urbanist was invited into many conversations with development stakeholders.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- A number of interviewees commented on how useful it had been to have early conversations with Professor Brian Evans in his role as City Urbanist to help understand the holistic approach that the city was trying to foster when thinking about place developments, with a focus on design quality and delivery on social, environmental & economic outcomes. This had been prior to submitting to the GURP for feedback.
- A number of interviews suggested the GURP review process could be strengthened further with the City Urbanist providing more advice and input to the criteria being used by review panel members, to ensure developments delivered on the City's emergent needs, contributing to social, economic & environmental outcomes.
- It was noted that very little information about the GURP is available online in terms of meetings and feedback, this information could be a very useful addition to a *PEOPLE make PLACES Knowledge Repository* if this was developed as part of PHASE 2 of the City Urbanist Initiative.
- It was suggested that connections with development stakeholders should be further enhanced if there was a Phase 2 to the City Urbanist Initiative, bringing key investors into Glasgow's place ambitions earlier would be very helpful.

## METROPOLITAN REGION STAKEHOLDERS

As noted earlier in the report, GCC's engagement within the region has been steadily evolving, with the launch of a wide range of different initiatives and enhanced powers for the Glasgow City Region Cabinet, now being chaired by GCC's leader.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interviewees highlighted the value that the *Metropolitan City* narrative, maps and data contained within the *PEOPLE make PLACES* report had been in supporting conversations, presentations and briefing documents with Metropolitan Regional Stakeholders.

# INTERACTIONS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: WORKING WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

*'If we hadn't had input from Brian we would have talked about place using the Scottish Government language and understanding rather Glasgow's language and understanding. This would have been a conversation in one direction. Brian's influence has turned this round, our understanding of what place really means on the ground is now influencing their language and direction'.*

*'It was very useful when exploring place policy ideas that cut across traditional department, to have one point of contact in Glasgow to discuss emerging ideas with'.*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

*'The translation by the City Urbanist of Glasgow's approach to place has been hugely valuable internationally, he has helped explain Glasgow's position using frameworks and concepts that make the knowledge instantly relatable to others, not many cities have this ability to communicate what they are doing so clearly'.*

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

The overview in the PEOPLE make PLACES report of plans, policies and strategy documents that have impact on the place agenda clearly shows the level of influence of Scottish Government level policy making. Formal structures and forums do exist to connect officers and elected members from GCC with this process. During his appointment the City Urbanist was invited into many conversations to discuss emerging place policy.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interviewees commented on what a useful conduit the City Urbanist had been for enabling conversations between Scottish Government and GCC.
- For Scottish Government officers it had been very useful to have a point of contact who could help give feedback on emerging ideas informed by a deep understanding of Glasgow's ecosystem of place.
- For GCC officers it had been very helpful to have input from the City Urbanist when interpreting Scottish Government Place Plans & Policies in a Glasgow context. There were occasions where this had given the GCC officers the confidence to constructively challenge ideas which had little relevance to the Glasgow context.

## INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Professor Brian Evans brought a network of international connections into his role of City Urbanist, most significantly recent work with the UN. Very early in his appointment as City Urbanist he used these links to bring in an International delegation. This helped build new relationships between the City Leadership and the important United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). This in turn has led to Susan Aitken, Leader of GCC being appointed to the role of Deputy Chair of the UNECE Forum of Mayors.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interviewees highlighted the value of Professor Brian Evans international connections in opening up Glasgow's contribution to the international place conversation.
- His work developing a clear description of Glasgow's place challenges and solutions in a relatable way has informed many high-level interactions and presentations between GCC leadership teams and their peers from other parts of the world.
- It was noted that around the world cities and their metropolitan areas are increasingly becoming the vehicle for shaping and implementing government level policy decisions.
- The initial international dialogue around place was quickly opening opportunities to share approaches around many other shared issues that impact global cities, for example, climate change, migration, inequalities, security.

# ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER AUDIENCES

## **INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: CONNECTING GLASGOW'S PLACE AMBITIONS TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES**

*'Brian's international work has been invaluable in connecting the city to its global peers, this has really helped the city understand where it sits, what's it good at, where is it falling short compared to others.'*

*'Susan Aiken the leader of the council now chairs the Global Resilient Cities Network. That speaks volumes about how Brian has helped connect the city globally, this now puts us in touch with 100 Peer cities around the world in places like China and India, as well as the, former industrial cities of America and so on.'*

## **ENGAGEMENT WITH PRESS AND MEDIA**

Throughout his appointment Professor Brian Evans built a strong relationship with both local and national press and media. As an independent strategic advisor to both the Council and senior officers he was able to comment on developments in the city in an objective way and communicate emerging ambitions for place within Glasgow and the region as an expert commentator. Between 2019-2013 he:

- Engaged with the *Herald*, *Scotsman* and *Times* writing articles & letters and responding to interview requests from journalists.
- Took part in radio broadcasts with *BBC Radio* & *UN Radio*, providing interviews and taking part in panel discussions.
- Was interviewed for *Housing Europe Podcasts*.
- Wrote journal articles for *The Panner* (published by the Royal Town Planning Institute) and *Landscape* (published by the Landscape Institute).

## **DISSEMINATING GLASGOW'S PLACE AMBITIONS TO ACADEMIA & PROFESSIONALS**

Before the City Urbanist appointment Professor Brian Evans was regularly invited to speak about his research at national and international conferences and symposia. On appointment he continued this dissemination work, his work as City Urbanist and the future development of Glasgow's Places became a key focus for this dissemination work. Since 2019 the following presentations and advisory work that reference his work as City Urbanist have been delivered to:

- *Gothenburg and Glasgow: City Architect and City Urbanist in discussion* event.
- *Urbanism in the City: A designed Intent*, Annual Conference, Irish Planning Institute,
- *Cities for All Ages: Unpacking the Concept*, UK & Portugal Inter-governmental Conference
- *Scottish Government City Centre Recovery Task Force*, Advisor
- *Royal Society of Edinburgh*, Respondee to NPF4
- *Scotland's Urban AGE 2022: Crash, Covid and Climate – Shocks to the System*
- *Place and Life in the ECE*, International Social Housing Festival, Helsinki
- *UNFCCC COP26: UNECE & Glasgow Events*, event coordination, keynote presentations, preparation of film
- *International Union of Architects (UIA) International Forum: Affordable Housing Activation (AHA)*

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY BRIEFING**  
By Brian M Evans

## Can COP26 cope with climate and COVID-19?

**Climate change presents a tangible environmental problem. It is not the only one, and it won't be the last. ... We'd better practise our global governance because we might need to respond to something ... on a far shorter timescale. What exactly? That's the point: we don't know yet.**

**Well we do now!** When drafting the article for the previous edition of *Landscape*,<sup>2</sup> and considering the alignment of thinking between the UN, UK & Scottish Governments, and Glasgow City, a small still voice at the back of my mind posed the rhetorical question "what could possibly go wrong?" and, contemplating the alchemy of international affairs, I recalled the phrase (it appears now misattributed) of Harold McMillan: "Events, dear boy, events". I confess, I had nothing specific in mind beyond the caprice of international leaders, terrorism, extreme weather events and an awareness that China and Asian countries were facing a new SARS virus. The copy was sent off on 27th

January, two days before the first confirmed case in the UK. By the time the piece appeared in print, the UK, and half the world, was in lockdown. COP26 was postponed until summer 2021, along with the Tokyo Olympics and almost everything else.

This is a cruel and severe pandemic with an omnipresent shadow of grief, stress, worry and fear. We lament those lost, carry in our hearts those in front line services and watch in disbelief as many – who should have known better – recalibrate their view of who matters in society. Occupations, whose value the readers of this journal will never have doubted.

As lockdown wears on what are we learning? And specifically, what are we learning for landscape and urban design? We have learned that some people have just realised the importance of parks and greenspace in cities, especially in areas of high density where balconies are also important since some people don't have gardens. Because guess what, these assets are important for people's health. Who knew?

By the time you read this, it will be old news that the redistribution of road space (called for over many decades by landscape architects, urban designers and urbanists) has

come to pass by the magical device of the TTRO (temporary traffic regulation order), as local authorities across the UK are liberated from, or compelled by, Government to make more space available for social distancing to enable a gradual release from lockdown, following the lead of cities such as Milan and Paris.

There is a wide-ranging conversation to be had about the parameters of what any 'new normal' should be. As I write, the Scottish Government has published a plain English document to begin what First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has referred to as an 'adult conversation' with the people of Scotland.<sup>4</sup> From this and other emerging Government papers and media commentary, we may expect a discourse around the interrelated concerns of public health; an inclusive economy; place and community and a low-carbon society. Resilience will be a central and cross-cutting theme likely addressed in three phases – a slow, short-term transition extending social distancing and shielding with an examination of what this means for the adaptation and management of public space; a structural transition through the mid-term with a (probably severe) recession when

**1. City skyline before and during coronavirus lockdown.**  
Click to enlarge

**When we see the Earth from space, we see ourselves as a whole ... one planet, one human race.**

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY**  
By Brian Evans

## The 'cocktail of change' improving the cities we live in

**Making a house a home**

Nov 2020 • 26 min 18 sec

**Episode Description**

We can't judge a book by its cover but can we have a clear idea of the vision of a city by looking at how liveable it is? Paying special attention to the level of existing affordable housing, the configuration of its neighbourhoods, the ecological footprint of homes and people's access to green spaces, could be a hint helping us to define how functional megapolises, cities, small towns and rural areas are.

Welcome to the podcast of Housing Europe, the European Federation of public, cooperative and social housing providers. This is the 6th episode dedicated to the 'Housing 2030' joint international initiative of Housing Europe, UN-Habitat and UNECE.

Glasgow's first ever City Urbanist, Brian Evans is the guest of "Making a house a home". To him, living in cities is a state of being and he sometimes prefers leaving abstraction, percentages and technical terms out of the housing narrative, to remind that people are in the centre of their homes and not in the periphery. Working also as a Professor at Scotland's Glasgow School of Art, the discussion with Brian Evans gives a lot of food for thought.

**MAKING A HOUSE A HOME**

**FEATURE**

## Glasgow prepares for COP26

Glasgow's first ever city urbanist explains his hopes for the long-term legacy of COP26 for the city where he lives and works.

**1. Glasgow Climate Plan.**  
© Glasgow City Council

**Brian Evans**  
Glasgow City Urbanist

**COP26 is not an event, it's 'the Conference of Parties'. It's not necessary to specify which conference, for it is the global conference on climate change. COP becomes an event by being a significant point in time, and will be remembered for what it did or did not achieve. We hold our breath in hope, if not expectation, that COP26 will be the moment when, collectively, we stepped back from the brink. This global conference is being staged in my hometown – Glasgow.**

As I write this, there are under 100 days until COP26, and the IPCC 2021 report has just landed with the deafening thump of what its authors have described in the press as a "Code Red" alert for humanity. At just shy of 4000 pages, it's a lengthy and challenging read. We all know the need for individual action, we certainly need national action, but above all, we now need international and global action. We need the global community and world leaders to heed Greta Thunberg's plaintive, simple and blindingly obvious cry: "Don't listen to me, listen to the scientists!" There is now no hiding place.

So how do we listen to the scientists at the local level? And more importantly, how do we act at the local level – at the level, say, of the COP host city? "Build back Better" was the phrase of 2020. But better than what? And to what end? To me, this means

recovery through climate responsive action. Bringing economic and social recovery together with climate mitigation action.

COVID-19 has had an immediate and visceral effect with potentially serious consequences for the individual as well as communities and nations. After a stumbling start, we reconfigured lots of city spaces to make them safer for people to physically distance, and in so doing developed a new urban aesthetic – the boardwalk placed in the street – enabled though emergency and temporary roads regulations. In April 2020, after suggesting such a thing, I was told "that'll never happen here" – and then it did, after Paris and Milan showed the way and we saw the elegant 'kit of parts' designed by Vinova, the Swedish Design Agency.

In the book 'Adventures in the 21st Century: The Future starts here', John Higgs has outlined the paradox of our times. It goes like this: "if we are to build the city of the future, we must first imagine it and what happens to our collective consciousness and mental health if the only futures we can imagine are apocalyptic and dystopian" We need to factor in hope.

In recent work for the Long Now Foundation of San Francisco, Peter Leyden looks back from a perspective 80 years out and distinguishes between inexorable processes and the inevitability of their outcomes. Leyden reminds us that, as the Architects of the Anthropocene, we have agency that can influence the inevitability of its outcome. So, as we imagine our way out of the pandemic, we must migrate the urgency of that collective response into action, to influence the inexorable forces of extreme weather events and increased sea levels as a result of ice-melt and warming oceans, and in order to generate the imperative

**Glasgow's Climate Plan**  
Our Response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

**1. Glasgow, host city for COP26, view north towards Ben Lomond. The Clyde Campus which will become UN territory for the duration of COP26 is shown circled in red - source: Collective Commons License**

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY**  
By Brian Evans

## Glasgow 2020 – a fair COP?

The next United Nations climate change summit will take place in Glasgow this November. COP26 will see up to 30,000 delegates attend the event. Glasgow's City Urbanist, Brian Evans outlines the challenges and opportunities for the profession and argues for leadership and a designed response in tackling climate emergency.

**Before we can build the city of the future, we must first imagine it.** This is a starting point most designers would endorse. Unfortunately, as John Higgs later elaborates in his book "The Future starts here: Adventures in the twenty-first century", the future we are imagining is a dystopian vision of waning ecological destruction, alarming extinction of species, uncontrolled global heating and failing political and economic systems.<sup>1</sup> To rational believers the science is undeniable. However, stated as bald facts and when accompanied by programmes of draconian countermeasures, this approach is terrifying people into a fatalism that encourages enjoyment today, because the future is doomed, whilst simultaneously living in a state of high anxiety about the viability of future generations and the planet's ability to sustain the human species. The message is clearly correct, but the messaging is failing and robbing

Figure 9  
EXAMPLES OF ARTICLES

# SECTION 4

REFLECTION ON KEY FINDINGS IN THE  
**PEOPLE make PLACES** REPORT:

- PEOPLE make PLACES: A CONVERSATION,  
WORKSHOP FINDINGS – 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2023
- COMMENTS FROM INTERVIEWEES JAN-MAY 2024

# REFLECTION ON FINDINGS

## PEOPLE MAKE PLACES: A CONVERSATION

Workshop: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023

To coincide with the publishing of the PEOPLE make PLACES report, a workshop was held at the Lighthouse, Glasgow in Jan 2023 to allow key stakeholders to give feedback on findings and give their perspective on next steps. Professor Brian Evans, set the scene for the workshop by introducing the Place Commission\Glasgow's 'People make Places' report. He described key findings from the report, highlighting the valuable set of place stories that had been captured and outlined key recommendations from work to date. GCC Leader, Susan Aitken, reflected on the background and motivations that had led to the establishment of the role of City Urbanist and the Place Commission in Glasgow. She then considered how timely the recent People make Places report was for the city, as its population emerged from the recent pandemic, continued to deal with socio-economic challenges and worked to deliver on the city's net zero targets.

The 50 participants at the event then explored some of the challenges and opportunities identified in the report. Round table conversations were held with participants working in seven groups.

- Conversation One was a Call to Action and explored: How can we change shift our mindsets to accelerate and scale delivery on Health, Social, Environmental and Economic outcomes for everybody through Glasgow's future placemaking?
- Conversation Two focused on Enabling Action and explored: What needs to happen to Glasgow's ecosystem of place to enable this acceleration and scaling? How will the City's proposed initiatives contribute (Stock Transfer, Place Bureau & Place Associations)? What else could be done to drive collective impact?

Key outcomes from both conversations are shown overleaf in Figures 9 and 10.



Figure 10

**IMAGE FROM: PEOPLE make PLACES: A CONVERSATION – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023**

Figure 11

OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES FROM CONVERSATION ONE

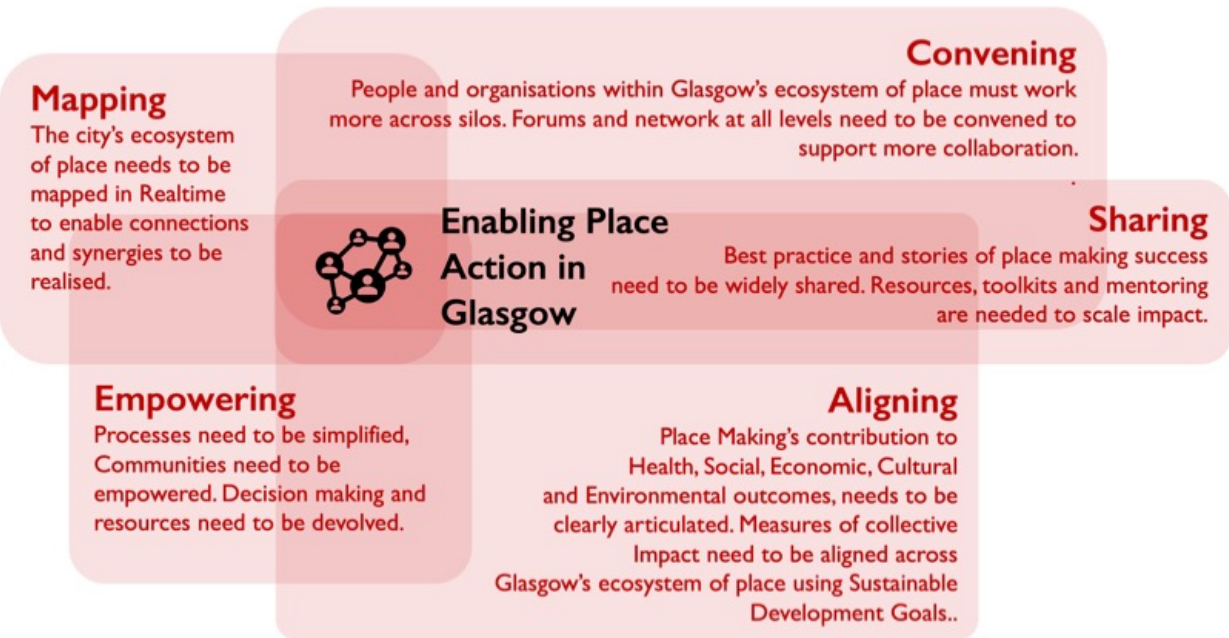
Conversation One was a 'Call to Action'. The seven workshop groups identified a range of actions that would shift mindsets of people working and living in the city to help deliver on Health, Social, Environmental and Economic outcomes for everybody through Glasgow's future placemaking?

How we engage	How we work	Actions we take
<b>Listen</b> Listen more to the place needs of Glasgow's communities.	<b>Work with urgency</b> Shift the way the city thinks about places, by changing behaviours now	<b>Talk about 'place' widely</b> The word 'Place' mobilises cross-sector conversations, use the term more widely.
<b>Gain Trust</b> Gain trust from groups who are disenfranchised from place decisions	<b>Embrace Creativity</b> Harness the city's arts, architectural & design expertise in place making.	<b>20 min neighbourhoods</b> Build on powerful existing place models such as 20-minute neighbourhoods
<b>Empower</b> Give communities agency to deliver change in their local places	<b>Share learning</b> Share lessons learnt across Glasgow's ecosystem of place and beyond	<b>Use UN SDG framework</b> Use Sustainable Development Goals as a polestar to inform all place initiatives
<b>Build conversations</b> Move from project directed place consultations to ongoing conversations	<b>Inspire activism</b> Be less risk averse, remove blocks, encourage experimentation	<b>Build Collective Impact</b> Recognise and build on 'marginal gains', encourage small and big place projects
<b>Involve all demographics</b> Engage with all place perspectives from the view young to the elderly	<b>Think out of current silos</b> Encourage networking and collaboration for those responsible for place in the city	<b>Transfer Assets</b> Prioritise transfer of control of existing place assets to enable change

Figure 12

OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES FROM CONVERSATION TWO

Conversation Two explored how actions could be enabled. The findings and suggested next steps described in the PEOPLE make PLACES report were discussed, participants then listed what they saw as priorities for an agile entity like the suggested 'Place Bureau'.



# REFLECTION ON FINDINGS

## COMMENTS FROM INTERVIEWEES: JAN-MAY 2024

Seven next steps were laid out in the PEOPLE-makes-PLACES report in January 2023. Interviewee's comments on these recommended next steps were collected 12 months later between Jan – May 2024.

### 1. PLACE OUTCOMES

Working with principal stakeholders and community groups, Glasgow should develop a series of place outcomes and indicators that are consistent with propositions of *Place Quality*, *Place Attachment* and *Place Value* as contained in the PEOPLE make PLACES report

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Interviewees welcomed the new vocabulary of *Place Quality*, *Place Value* and *Place Attachment* that had been articulated in the PEOPLE make PLACES report. These were useful new ways to think about the contribution made by place to people's lives and as the report indicated actually unpacking them with stakeholders and community groups would be very timely.
- It was suggested that there now needs to be more thought on how this could be achieved and how these outcomes could begin to leverage new approaches in the city.

### 2. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is the nearest thing Glasgow has to a place ambition. The PEOPLE make PLACES report recommended that this should be related to the Scot Gov National Performance Framework.

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- This recommendation was acknowledged to be a great example of the benefits of more joined up thinking between the various Plans and Frameworks that inform policy in Glasgow.

### 3. PLACE STOCK TRANSFER

One of the major learning outcomes of the Place Commission was around the significance and impact of Glasgow's historic housing stock transfer, this enabled people empowerment and turned a debt-ridden depreciating asset into a force for change. There could be a dialogue with Scottish Government, Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Futures and other key stakeholders to explore transfer of other property, buildings and land where diminishing local authority resources mean that they can no longer be maintained adequately.

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- This stock transfer concept was noted to be one of the most valuable and timely recommendations in the PEOPLE-make-PLACES report. It was felt that this really built on lessons from the housing stock transfer to Housing Associations, which has been one of Glasgow's great success stories.
- Many interviewees did comment on the complexity of facilitating stock transfer, particularly ensuring long-term financial viability of transfers. Convening the right group of stakeholders and skill-sets (legal, financial as well as communities, entrepreneurs and design expertise) to work through the opportunity was seen as a priority.
- It was suggested that compiling a taxonomy of potential assets that could be transferred would be an early priority. In parallel early engagement with community groups to establish needs and local vision and having a number of pilots that could act as case studies to inform and inspire others would be key.

# PEOPLE make PLACES REPORT

## 4. PLACE GOVERNANCE

Work with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to develop a governance proposition for Glasgow Place Associations. (Taking learning from Glasgow's successful community-based Housing Associations).

### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- The recommendations about Place Governance were seen as a logical and very important part of the stock transfer concept.

## 5. ESTABLISHING A GLASGOW PLACE BUREAU

Glasgow should consider the formation of a Glasgow Place Bureau that would be overseen by a board made up of GCC, Community Representatives, A&DS, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Glasgow City Region and Wheatley Group Glasgow. It is envisaged this would be small agile group whose function would be recording, networking, disseminating and facilitating place projects and place programmes. This small team of place making professionals would deliver:

- Joined up action to improve quality, enhance efficiency and accelerate delivery.
- Create a culture of place transformation across the city.
- Tackle the place skills gap, by establishing an accredited placemaking programme skills programme and a National Certificate course for local activities and development trusts.

### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- Everybody recognised the need to build a capacity and capability in the city to work across silos in new ways. It was felt that Professor Brian Evans had connected people and had synthesised ideas from different stakeholder groups to bring ideas together into a report form. The next step was to facilitate a much more collaborative approach within real world projects and developments so that outcomes were actually informing place decisions on the ground and vice versa.
- A number of interviewees highlighted how powerful design approaches can be in facilitating collaboration. Examples of design policy units within local authorities that facilitate new ways of working were discussed, including Glasgow's own Centre for Civic Innovation. It was noted that at the moment these tended to focus on new new ways of delivering services rather than new ways of thinking about places, infrastructure and systems in the city. The work that AD&S has done in other local authorities around places was highlighted as an exemplar.
- It was noted that establishing this capability might be about upskilling existing staff within GCC in new ways of seeing challenges and co-designing solutions, developing a team of inhouse 'Facilitators' rather than creating a separate team in a new organisation.
- Thoughts on the suggested 'Board' for the Glasgow Place Bureau were similar to reflections on the role of Place Commissioners discussed elsewhere in this report. Key questions were, should it have a chair? Would a future City Urbanist lead the activities of the Board or report to it?

### 'INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: THE VALUE OF THE PLACE BUREAU

*'Staff from the Council and other organisations could be seconded into the Place Bureau, this would help unlock their personal ambition and commitment to do good things for the city, sometimes it's difficult to do that in your day job ... people went to university coming out, hoping to change the world, not to tell people that they couldn't have a sky dish on their A listed building.'*

*'We should be challenging others in the city to second their staff into the Bureau ... the universities, businesses, colleges basically any organisation that has expertise.'*

# PEOPLE make PLACES REPORT

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

### 6. ESTABLISH A PLACE ACTIVATION PANEL & A PLACE ENABLING PANEL

- The Place Activation Panel would be drawn from major stakeholder bodies with individuals seconded to act on a community's behalf with the public approvals process.
- The Place Enabling Panel would be assigned small number of paid days to co-create with communities to imagine their places and configure proposals for redesign.

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- The Place Activation Panel and Place Enabling Panels were again both welcomed as concepts. Both initiatives could play an important role in, or even be integrated into a Stock Transfer process in the city. Both ideas aligned with the ideas of building skills capacity and capability described in the discussion about a future Place Bureau.
- Like other recommendations the key challenge is understanding how these Panels would fit into existing activities and decision-making structures in GCC.

### 7. GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL PLACE EXHIBITION 2028-2030

Glasgow should consider a two-year international dialogue building on previous significant festivals over the last 40 years. People would be welcomed to Glasgow to meet with local people and those driving a just transition. The Place Bureau could act as the co-ordinating body for supporting international exhibition work celebrating the Clyde, low carbon homes the Clyde Climate forest and other initiatives.

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS:

- The idea of raising the profile of Glasgow's place making work was welcomed by interviewees. During his tenure it was noted that Brian Evans, through his international connections, had brought many new people to the City, particular in 2019 when the UN Commission visited to engage with Glasgow's housing initiative activities.
- One or two interviewees suggested the idea of an International Place Exhibition was perhaps too vague, it was difficult to understand how this would work and how it would add value. It seemed like a nice thing to do, but how would it move Glasgow forward? This proposal might need a clearer description to achieve full buy-in.

# SECTION 5

REFLECTIONS ON HOW PHASE 2 OF CITY URBANIST  
ACTIVITY MIGHT BE ORGANISED

## CITY URBANIST PHASE 2

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTE: **PHASE 1 ENDS**

*'If the council had not been in such a very difficult financial position, it would have probably liked to have continued with the role.'*

*'If we get another go at this, perhaps we should frame it at the Region level next time.'*

The appointment of Professor Brian Evans as City Urbanist ran from January 2019 to March 2023. Section 1-4 of this report show that there is wide recognition of the impact the role had had at many different levels. Equally, all interviewees recognised that like every Local Authority, GCC faced considerable fiscal pressures and that this had probably influenced the decision not to extend the City Urbanist experiment.

In the PEOPLE make PLACES, 2023 report, seven recommendations were made for further work, 12 months on from the publication of this report, interviewees were asked to suggest how they would define priorities for further development of the City Urbanist initiative if there was an opportunity for a Phase 2

This section of the report provides a synthesis of these discussions, this interpretation has been developed by the report author who has systematically collated interviewee feedback into an integrated set of potential roles and activities for a Phase 2 appointment.

## CITY URBANIST PHASE 2

### INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: PHASE 2 POSSIBILITIES

*'The key question for GCC and Glasgow is what sort of City it wants to be in the next 20 years? In terms of the quality of its place making, housing, regenerating the city centre, net zero etc, Brian nudged this forward but the City has still to nail its colours to the mast.'*

*'I think it is an unfolding narrative, the next chapter could be different from what's gone before or could be a continuation, but it must be informed by what's gone before like any decent narrative.'*

*'Glasgow is really good as an event city, it can pull together time limited teams who absolutely have to deliver against a timeline. Brian was always asking why can't you adopt this approach to tackle some of the wicked policy issues? The event is 2030 Net Zero Carbon why can't we create a team to deliver on this ... the place agenda will be at the centre.'*

### HIGH-LEVEL PRINCIPLES FOR PHASE 2

Interviewees all suggested maintaining the high-level principles of Phase 1, notably:

- Focusing on delivering *Social, Economic & Environmental outcomes* through a focus on delivery of high-quality places.
- Maintaining independence and the freedom to be a '*Grit in the Oyster*' across both GCC and other city stakeholders.
- Continuing to facilitate thinking across the silos, disciplines, stakeholders and interest groups that influence Glasgow's ecosystem of place

### DEFINING AIMS FOR A PHASE 2

Many interviewees suggested that the aims of the initial City Urbanist's appointment had been very open, they thought that this had been the right thing to when there was so much exploratory work to be completed.

Moving forward, everybody agreed that a Phase 2 would benefit from a more focused set of aims. Interviewees expressed these aims in many ways.

Synthesising these comments, the author of this report suggests these could be thought of at three levels.

- **LEVEL 1: SYSTEM FOCUS** This would involve the City Urbanist facilitating new approaches, building networks with shared aims, sharing knowledge, collecting data, communicating successes across the city's ecosystem of placemaking. If successful, this approach would deliver broad collective impact across Glasgow at all its different levels.
- **LEVEL 2: PROJECT/PROGRAMME FOCUS** This would pioneer new approaches in one particular part of the city's ecosystem of place. This would require a deep dive into a specific set of issues or location and would aim to deliver direct impact through tangible changes on the ground by piloting a new approach. Possible areas of project/programme focus are described in section 5.
- **LEVEL 3: KNOWLEDGE SHARING** This would continue the process of curating information and building case studies about Glasgow and its place making. In Phase 2 this material would be made available through as a digitally accessible resource.

Figure 13 provides a visual overview of how activities might be organised if there was a Phase 2.

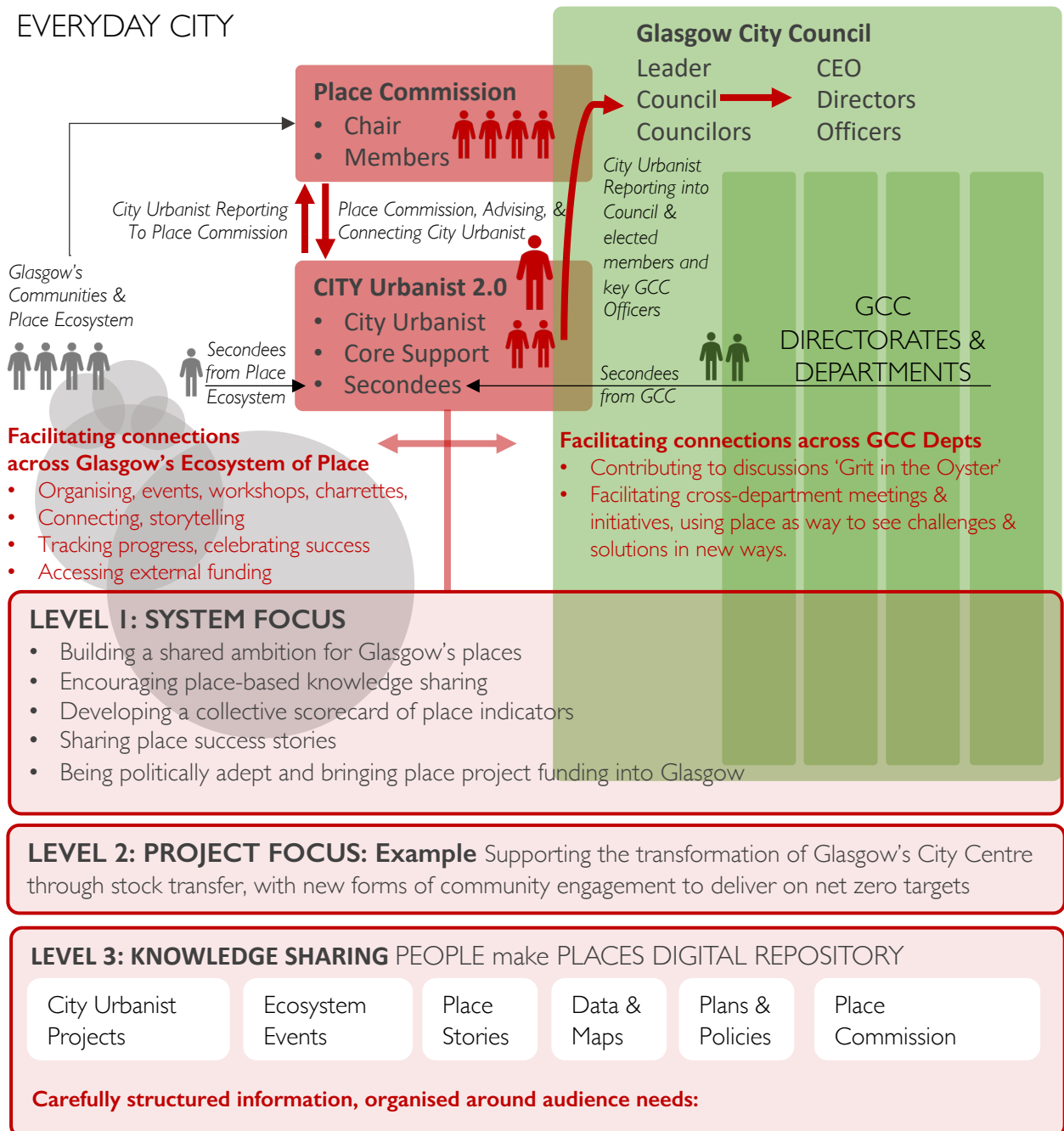
Figure 13

**VISUAL OVERVIEW OF HOW PHASE 2 OF THE CITY URBANIST ROLE COULD BE STRUCTURED**

*'In Glasgow it's often not about lack of resources, it's about how available resources are deployed. We need to think out of the box if we want a Phase 2'.*

**CITY URBANIST NEXT STEPS**

INTERNATIONAL CITY  
METROPOLITAN CITY  
EVERYDAY CITY



INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:

**THE VALUE OF THE ECOSYSTEM MAP**

*'The ecosystem map is an abstraction of what the real system looks like, but nevertheless it's highly valuable because everybody in the system can begin to see the connections and relationships between activities, people and policy that shape the places of Glasgow'*

INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:

**THE VALUE OF SYSTEMS THINKING**

*'Systems thinking is currently not in the mainstream of city planning, but it will be in the future, currently cities play lip service to systems thinking as part of their marketing hype. Brian's focus on real integrated systems defining our future places is very timely and nudges thinking on a long way'*

**LEVEL 1: A SYSTEM FOCUS**

In the PEOPLE make PLACES report the need to take a systems approach to place making is referenced many times. Participants in the Place Commissions Enquiry Round 1 and Round 2 workshops felt that the *ecosystem map of place in Glasgow* sketched out in the *People make Places* report could be developed further to support a collective impact. A summary of interviewee comments about how a PHASE 2 City Urbanist and their team could facilitate system-level activities and connections is shown below:

Creating an ecosystem atlas of place for Glasgow augmenting the *ecosystem map of place* to include more detail, in particular:

- A breakdown of the place needs of people under the three headings of *international, metropolitan* and *everyday city*.
- A register of past, present and planned place engagement projects to disseminate and inform.
- Documentation of place types, quantities and qualities.
- More detail on the protagonists section, with more detail on public, private and third sector place actors, networks and relationships.
- Maintaining up-to-date overview of the layers of policy that shape place development in Glasgow.

Continuing to build a shared ambition for Glasgow's places, encouraging adoption of social, environmental and economic objectives across all place making plans and initiatives in the city. This could be achieved by continuing to facilitate conversations across departments and directorates and with elected members within GCC. Encouraging the adoption of a place approach in strategies, plans and developments, whilst simultaneously working with external stakeholders. In a Phase 2 initiative mechanisms for doing this could be communicated more clearly.

Developing a shared approach to measurement and impact. The City Urbanist could develop and encourage project teams to adopt a collective scorecard of indicators to inform projects and initiatives. This could build on the four places outcomes described in the PEOPLE make PLACES report.

Encouraging knowledge development in the city through collective learning. This could be achieved by organising events, workshops, secondments and knowledge sharing across the city and by providing training and coaching in partnership with others. Examples of learning themes suggested in interviews include:

- Best practice approaches in Glasgow for engaging citizen's and the community in place-making projects.
- Approaches for securing funding for community place making initiatives.
- Using design approaches to establish projects needs, build briefs, co-design solutions and deliver measurable impact.
- Sharing processes for delivering impact against the four place outcomes described above.

Communicating and celebrated Glasgow's success stories through events, forums and social media. Sharing what was achieved and how this was done whilst exploring and explaining complex place topics. This would support ongoing positioning of Glasgow as a Metropolitan & International City.

Sign-posting stakeholders to sources of support for place-based projects and initiatives.

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:**

**STOCK TRANSFER**

*'The ideas around stock transfer are very valuable, but they are challenging, there are lots of mindsets that need to shift emotionally and politically, some people see it as a form of privatisation by the back door, the bigger picture needs spelling out.'*

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:**

**CITY CENTRE**

*'I know Glasgow is more than just the City Centre, but if you don't really get on top of this you can't be an International City and your Metropolitan role is quickly diluted.'*

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:**

**NET ZERO**

*'I think in the Council we have a lot of people working on Net Zero, somebody with the usual skills in this area might not add great value, but if they could integrate thinking through a design approach it might be a game changer.'*

## **LEVEL 2: A PROJECT/PROGRAMME FOCUS**

In parallel with the suggestions for a system-level focus many interviewees mentioned specific projects and initiatives that a Phase 2 City Urbanist appointment could deliver. This would require a deep dive into a specific set of issues, process or location and would aim to deliver direct impact through tangible changes on the ground. Some of the ideas discussed are outlined below.

- **STOCK TRANSFER** – This concept, recommended as an action in the PEOPLE make PLACES report was very widely supported. But many respondents were quick to point out that it needs careful unpacking, communities need to be engaged and a broad range of experts (legal, financial etc) and skillsets need to work together to establish how the Stock Transfer process could actually work.
- **GLASGOW CITY CENTRE** – Many interviewees suggested developments in the City Centre should be prioritised. Considerable investment is currently being made in the development of Glasgow's City Centre (George Square, Golden Z etc). There was wide agreement, however, that more initiatives will be needed and greater collaboration is still required between private and public sector to drive high quality design in the city centre urban environment.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLACE MAKING** – At the PEOPLE make PLACES conversation workshop in Jan 2023 the need to find new ways to ensure community engagement in place decision making was highlighted as a priority.
- **DELIVERING ON NET ZERO** – It was widely acknowledged that this would remain the highest priority issues for Glasgow's Places over the next 10 years although perhaps not in the eyes of Glasgow's citizens. It was also recognised how net zero is intimately linked to social and economic outcomes for the city, supporting the design housing and development planning elements of this agenda could form a key role for PHASE 2 of the City Urbanist.
- **STRENGTHENING THE CONCEPT OF AN URBAN DESIGN PANEL** – Glasgow currently has the *Glasgow Urban Design Panel* (GURP) hosted and facilitated by GCC which gives architects and developers the opportunity to present future development plans to peers and colleagues for feedback. A number of interviewees suggested the City Urbanist could play a key role in shifting the criteria use to assess ideas at this forum and a wider range of expertise could be bought into the forum.

Delivering on a project/programme led agenda would access to adequate resources. The exact focus would need to be decided through discussion with many stakeholders, potentially through some form of co-design workshop. Many of these themes overlap and could be combined into one project/programme (for example, a city centre focus could also explore city centre-based stock transfer and new modes of community engagement). It was also noted that any incoming City Urbanist would bring their own skills and insights that might influence direction. In every theme a series of pilot projects could be initiated as a test of change to fast-track learning.

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
HOW THE PLACE  
COMMISSION COULD  
WORK**

*'Previous commissions I have been involved with have had a process and have then engaged the council at a senior level, the Place Commission didn't seem to work in this way.'*

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
GOVERNANCE &  
REPORTING**

*'If there was a Phase 2, it's now time to sharpen the pencil, and really sort out the governance arrangements for the role, get some bite in there, bite that comes from authority and respect. Make it explicit and transparent in how it all works, and how it reports into decision-making groups'*

*'I think any future appointment needs to continue to be right in the centre, at the right hand of the chief exec and the leader, not in the planning service, or some other department.'*

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
DIGITAL REPOSITORY**

*'We need people in other parts of the world to click on Glasgow and be inspired by our progress with the place agenda, information needs to be online. In 2024 if you are not online, you don't exist.'*

## **ADVISORY GROUP / BOARD FOR PHASE 2**

It was noted that the version 1.0 of the role had been supported by the 'Place Commission' made up of Place Commissioners with expertise in architecture, design, economics, engineering, and public health, due to the challenges of the pandemic there had only been limited opportunities to convene the group and it was suggested the governance role of the group was unclear. In any Phase 2 having some form of Place Commission / Advisory Group / Board with a clearer remit was seen as important.

## **CITY URBANIST REPORTING**

It was suggested that the City Urbanist could usefully have a clearer reporting lines into GCC's Council of elected members. Quarterly or 6-monthly reporting could also be made to the Place Commission if it was re-configured with a steering group function.

## **LEVEL 3: PEOPLE make PLACES KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY**

The PEOPLE make PLACES 2022 Report of the Place Commission, was seen as a key compendium of information. Several recommendations were made for how this could be developed in Phase 2 of the role:

- The PEOPLE make PLACES material should be made available as a regularly updated searchable web-based resource. When designing this careful thought should be given to who might want to use the resource, what information they might want and how this should be structured.
- Regular updates of this information should be communicated through social media (LinkedIn etc).
- This should build on the place vocabulary developed through Version 1.0 of the role, particularly concepts like the *International, Metropolitan & Everyday City*
- The resource could report on City Urbanist Phase 2 initiatives, for example,
  - *Transforming Glasgow's City Centre through Stock Transfer, with new forms of community engagement to deliver on net-zero targets*
  - *Nurturing Glasgow's Ecosystem of Place*
- To remain relevant the resource needed to be kept up to date. capturing the latest developments in the City, key elements would be:
  - Updating and creating new 'Place Stories'
  - Updating Listings of Plans, Policies & Strategies
  - Updating Maps, Trends, Data & Facts
- Information on the City Urbanist 2.0 Advisory Group / Board and relationship to GCC and other organisations should be contained in the website.

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
SKILLS REQUIRED**

*'Urbanism turned out to be much more than just urban design, it was the whole approach to things, the integrated place approach, this has shifted my thinking about the skills you need to work in this space.'*

*'It's very clear that we wouldn't be looking for a 'starchitect'. You are looking for someone with design expertise but also considerable political experience to help bring people together'.*

*'Any future City Urbanist will need to be a visionary but most importantly they have to be able to reflect on the collective vision of different actors, they need to co-ordinate conflicting interests and visions. They need to build trust by being a neutral mediator.'*

*'Phase 2 must be about the vision of the young people in our city, the citizens who are going to inherit the city and make it work for all of us, any future role holder must help facilitate the development of this collective vision.'*

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
ROLE SUPPORT**

*'At the beginning I think there were doubts that an appointment at this limited scale could have much impact on the Glasgow planning super tanker, in the end it did, imagine what you could do if it was supported at scale next time.'*

**PROFILE & BACKGROUND OF PHASE 2 POSTHOLDER**

- Phase 1 had been world leading in making a City Urbanist appointment. It was acknowledged that this had really broken the mould for this type of city role.
- Phase 2 should be about place-based innovation requiring somebody with 'T' shaped expertise - the horizontal part of the 'T' being the ability to see the place agenda holistically, facilitating collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, the vertical part of the T being an in-depth understanding of place seen through the eyes of a relevant discipline (architecture, planning, infrastructure, design or areas such as economics, social geography were mentioned).
- An in-depth understanding of the history and dynamics of Glasgow had clearly been extremely useful in Phase 1 of the role, this would be desirable in a Phase 2 postholder.
- For Phase 2 somebody with excellent facilitation skills would be key

**ROLE SUPPORT**

Phase 1.0 of the City Urbanist had been made on 0.4 WTE (Whole-Time-Equivalent) basis with some project-by-project administrative support from Glasgow City Council, in addition, at various points in the project GCC officers from DRS/NRS were seconded on a part-time basis to the initiative. It was acknowledged that to deliver a higher level of impact, particularly a digital repository of information and more facilitation across Glasgow's ecosystem of place in Phase 2 a higher level of core staffing support would be needed.

**FINDING RESOURCES FOR PHASE 2**

Phase 1 of the City Urbanist role was supported by Glasgow City Council funds. Looking objectively at the impact and contribution that a Phase 2 might have (based on learnings from Phase 1) it could be that other funding could be accessed to support or co-fund a second iteration of the role. Interviewees highlighted parallel investments that are made by Scottish Government into initiatives like Architecture & Design Scotland (currently > £2 million per year, with a remit to, *'bring people together and make better places for everyone'*). Other regional initiatives with different forms of *'levelling up funding'* were also mentioned. Aligning the ambitions of a Phase 2 role with the funding priorities of both Scottish and UK policy making could help unlock future funding from sources beyond GCC.

**INTERVIEWEE QUOTE:  
FUNDING**

*'We need to be thinking about funding in new ways. So many organisations and funds are now supporting net zero, community engagement, levelling up, inequalities etc, with access to so many partners in Glasgow in different sectors, industry, higher education etc there must be ways to bring in new forms of project funding.'*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: POLITICAL VISIBILITY

*'Due to the pandemic and lack of time the City Urbanist probably didn't spend enough time with elected members, When they were engaged they all loved the work, but many ultimately didn't get to find as much as they should have. Without elected member support an initiative in GCC will go nowhere, these relationships need to be baked in next time.'*

*'A key role like City Urbanist should transcend the politics of the city.'*

## INTERVIEWEE QUOTES: HALF-LIFE

*The shortcoming of this sort of initiative is always follow-through, when the thing comes to an end there is always a rapid half-life if mechanisms have not been put in place to move thinking forward.*

*'There is no point in having a post like City Urbanist as a piece of one-off Civic Jewellery.'*

*'There is a slight danger that some of those proposals just get stalled for lack of ownership, someone has to pick this up and champion it.'*

## GALVANISING GCC CROSS-PARTY & EXECUTIVE SUPPORT FOR PHASE 2

- Unpacking Phase 1 of the City Urbanist role through this report does allow milestones in the appointment to be seen. The role was conceived as a manifesto commitment by the incoming SNP administration and was then initiated and implemented by Glasgow City Council officers. The review process highlighted some of the complexities of this process. If there was a Phase 2 it would be very useful to communicate the remit of the role more clearly within GCC and to external stakeholders at the initiation of the project.
- If, as this report suggests, the impact for the City has been significant and the place innovation agenda is becoming increasingly important for Glasgow it would be very important to gain support across the political and executive spectrum for Phase 2.
- Phase 2 would benefit from clearer line management and reporting.
- If Glasgow could show its commitment to a long-term, rolling programme of 'City Urbanists' with a clear role and application process, its reputation in the eyes of both internal and external stakeholders (and prospective role holders) could be enhanced.

## DANGER OF INITIATIVE HALF-LIFE

Respondents highlighted the success that Glasgow has in responding to and delivering on time-limited projects that have a significant place dimension (European Capital of Culture, Commonwealth Games etc), but sometimes lacks follow-through and a long-term commitment to delivery against a vision. It was felt that the City Urbanist investment had been timely and demonstrated the City's commitment to the place agenda, but that without a commitment beyond the 2019-2023 period there was danger this would be seen as another short-term initiative and that the ideas and energy developed through the role could experience a rapid half-life. This could be reputationally damaging for the city.

*'In the past it was always  
Glasgow and a big wall around  
it ... there is now much more  
engagement from Glasgow and  
its leadership with the regional  
agenda, the two are completely  
interconnected.'*

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Brian Evans	City Urbanist (2019-2023), Professor of Urbanism+Landscape, GSA

*'Phase 2 must be about the vision of the young people in our city, the citizens who are going to inherit the city and make it work for all of us.'*

## About the author: Professor Tom Inns

Tom uses design & systems thinking approaches to support interdisciplinary collaborations in business, healthcare, universities, the public sector and charities. He combines over 25 years of experience in executive leadership and board positions with expertise in facilitation. He uses structured approaches to help visualise challenges, set strategy and communicate to stakeholders. He works through his consultancy, COFINK Ltd., and as a Visiting Professor at Heriot-Watt University and Research Fellow at the University of Strathclyde.

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