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Next steps for city-region policy in Scotland: setting out the options.

FINAL REPORT

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Executive summary

- There is growing demand for **regional and city-region policy to become a central focus of policymaking in Scotland**. Much of Scottish regional development policy has emerged in piecemeal form, rather than through strategic design. Different initiatives, action plans and investment programmes, though well-intentioned, have failed to provide a coherent view across UK, Scottish and city-region policymaking. If Scotland's city-regions are to succeed, a new approach is required. One grounded in an understanding of what each city-region's needs and opportunities are, and what each tier of government should do to support.
- In this report, we draw upon new research into the operation of city-region economic development policymaking in Scotland.

Drawing upon this new research, we make several observations:

- Firstly, many of our City-region Deals are close to a decade old, so looking ahead to what comes next provides an opportunity to take stock and to design a new regional development framework, where capacities and responsibilities can increase incrementally. Here, we suggest the creation of a **tiered structure**, something now present in England.
- Secondly, recent debates about how to improve regional economic performance and accountability quickly focus on elected mayors. Yet the emergence of strong mayors in small nations presents a complex and challenging political prospect, and this is before considering the wider trilateral architecture of city-region policymaking in Scotland. Views on the opportunities and risks of mayors are mixed. **Careful consideration needs to be given to whether such a mayoral role is central to making progress towards regional objectives.**
- Thirdly, one success of City-region Deals has been the opportunity – and requirement – for regional partners to work together, form and strengthen trusted relationships, and learn from each other. In this way, they provide a platform to build on gains made, reflecting functional economic geographies. **Future steps emerging from the UK or Scottish Government would do well to retain and strengthen this existing capacity** – and, crucially, ground future plans in the experience developed by these existing partnerships.
- Fourthly, **the economies within Scotland face unique advantages and challenges, and policy needs to reflect this diversity**. While the existing deals have been a useful, if modest, step in providing a more localised ownership of key activities and outcomes, the learning from these deals demonstrates the importance of any future arrangement reflecting the bespoke needs and opportunities of each area.

- Finally, there is a demand for **greater devolution *within* Scotland**. This may involve transfers of powers. But it could also entail more innovative methods for those in city-regions to shape national policies – within their region – to yield better outcomes.

Recommendations

- The next 12-18 months provide the opportunity to develop a new framework that links city-region local authorities, the Scottish Government and UK Government in arrangements - within a tiered structure - for further regional development and devolution.** This approach reflects asymmetric decentralisation (different places showing different capacities), yet, by giving a view on what is available to localities based on different capacities and accountabilities, it provides parity of treatment. Some places will be ready for more powers and responsibilities soon; others might wish to take more time to develop local capacities and to decide on optimal policy interventions.

This framework could take the following ordering:

First level (basic capacity) - Foundational City-regions	Second-level (evolved capacity) - Strategic City-regions	Third level (advanced capacity) - Established City-regions
Dedicated stream of support/resource; explicit formulae; lighter sign off of interventions.	First level, plus greater consolidation of centrally directed funding pots (UKG and SG guidance in agreement).	First level, plus integrated settlement giving greater local discretion on allocations (UKG and SG guidance in agreement).

	Foundational	Strategic	Established
Dedicated support and resource, and lighter sign off	x	x	x
Consolidated funding		x	x
Integrated settlement			x

In principle, levels two and three would require coordination between the UK and Scottish governments over funding, and on what terms they would be administered. Steps to give funding over longer-time frames would be useful too.

We do not speculate on at what level a specific Scottish city-region should be allocated, other than to note that this should be a matter of deliberation through the process of developing local growth plans by Scottish city-regions.

- A re-configuration to partnership and co-working, and away from top-down transactionalism, has widespread support. City-region Deals have been a useful starting point in rejuvenating a city-regional mode of working. However, with higher orders of government, there remains a sense that this relationship has often been one of compliance rather than partnership. **We suggest that setting out Scottish city-region local growth plans provides a useful vehicle for helping to frame the discussion – and ‘rules of engagement’ – for this partnership working.**
- The programme management capacities of the existing deal teams provide a platform of capacity and competency to push forward regional development. But ongoing fiscal pressures, particularly at a local level, have led to limited resources. **All three tiers of government – UK, Scottish and City-region - should support local capacity development,** be it in the form of an intelligence hub (or hubs) or other function. This can help ensure that locally held knowledge supports local interventions.
- **We suggest that the architecture for more effective tripartite working (UKG, SG, localities) be agreed before any commitments are made in terms of moving to a mayoral model.** Mayors may be seen to be a welcome step by some, and in due course, however, securing more cooperative working within existing structures of policymaking should be a priority in the first instance. Scotland’s tripartite context poses complex questions about the roles taken and the potential political tensions that may confront a mayor from the outset. The creation of a mayoral system in Scotland risks adding an additional layer to an already complex governance system.

Potential actions for UK, Scottish and Local Government

Local authorities	UK Government	Scottish Government
<p>Short term – Initiate work on Scottish city-region local growth plans, with the intention to shape discussions on the form and function of future governance to support economic development (that is, the growth plan acts as the vehicle for a discussion about governance).</p> <p>Set out plans for capacity development to support further autonomies using recently announced SG funds. Shift in dialogue from ‘we want x’, to, ‘if we get x, we can achieve y and z’.</p>	<p>Short term – Commit to a dialogue on a tripartite regional development framework. Taking to that conversation a view that governance and accountability will need to be responsive and supportive of the tripartite structure (so, steps before or instead of a mayor).</p> <p>Support the emergence of local growth plans and discuss the localisation of policy autonomies within this discussion.</p> <p>Devoting time in existing governance fora to next steps, along with the delivery of existing deals.</p>	<p>Short term – Commit to a dialogue on a tripartite regional development framework.</p> <p>Support the emergence of local growth plans, utilising SG capacity funds, and discuss the localisation of policy autonomies.</p> <p>Devoting time in existing governance fora to next steps, along with the delivery of existing deals.</p>
<p>Outcomes from short term working (0-18 months) should aim to support the move into the second stage of city-region policymaking (beyond the initial deals). Here the UKG and SG could work toward a co-operative tripartite framework for regional development, be it through devolution or deconcentration. At this point, localities would be well served to build capacity and set out a long-term growth plan, which would act as the vehicle for a discussion around new autonomies and resources.</p>		
<p>Medium (or short) term – Take to the UKG and SG proposals for future city-region working based on alignment with UK and Scottish priorities (e.g. UKG Industrial Strategy, SG National Strategy for Economic Transformation).</p> <p>This may include a ‘devolution deal’ or an alternative package of co-working.</p>	<p>Medium term – Set out a framework that supports asymmetric approaches to decentralisation, based on tiers, with UKG and SG co-ordination on agreed autonomies to be held and deployed by whom.</p> <p>Open up national strategy applications, such as the industrial strategy, to tripartite working.</p>	<p>Medium term – Set out a framework that supports asymmetric approaches to decentralisation, based on tiers, with UKG and SG co-ordination on agreed autonomies to be held and deployed by whom.</p> <p>Implement changes to the working of national agencies, to support a regional perspective and reflexivity within city-region policymaking.</p>
<p>Outcomes from medium-term working (18-36 months) should support a firmer proposition for the next stage of a tripartite mode of working. Ideally, the new regional framework should be uniquely articulated for each city-region of Scotland. This could include a ‘devolution deal’ or alternative form of co-operative tripartite working that goes beyond contractualism.</p>		
<p>Long term – Continual monitoring of governance structures to ensure appropriate accountabilities to match roles and functions.</p> <p>A city-region may explore the creation of a mayoral position at this point, if limits on city-region working identified in the prior steps become apparent.</p>	<p>Long term – Embed the Scottish regional framework to guide decision-making.</p>	<p>Long term – Embed the Scottish regional framework to guide decision-making.</p> <p>Possibility of legislative steps for further governance arrangements, hinging on the demands of localities.</p>
<p>Outcomes from longer-term working (36+ months) will be a reflection on the efficacy of the first two steps, informed by collaborative working. At this point, more substantial governance steps may be considered.</p>		

Why we developed this report

Our work on Scottish city-region policy was motivated by a concern, in late 2024, that there was a gap in policymaking for urban and regional policy in Scotland; particularly relating to what comes next. This gap is particularly noticeable considering the steps being made in England. We engaged with policymakers in the Dundee (Tay Cities), Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow city-regions through the course of 2025 to capture **(1) what has been working well to date**, and **(2) what steps for city-region working could usefully come next**.

The work, which takes forward our long-standing interest in sub-national economic development policy, is predicated on in-depth workshops and other dialogues with key interlocutors. The workshops were undertaken in collaboration with each city-region, and specific workshop notes were shared with attendees, affording scope for comment and revision. Similarly, the preliminary report covering all city-regions was shared with attendees. We do not provide individual-specific responses or quotes, given our commitment to anonymise discussants and to encourage a free and frank exchange.

We are grateful to all participants we have engaged with and to those in other orders of government who we have discussed this work with.

Alongside the workshops, we compiled a documentary repository on each of the city-regions to both inform the workshop discussions, beforehand, and to reflect, afterwards, on the comments made during the workshops. The views and recommendations in this paper are those of the authors only.

Regional development in a changing world

Regional policymakers are now confronted with a series of challenges, or crises, where parlous productivity growth, persistent inequalities, and concerns over securing a transition to net zero in a just manner jostle for attentionⁱ. Facing this array of challenges are regional and local actors who seek to give a direction for development or, in the case of a so called “left behind place”ⁱⁱ, to arrest challenging development fortunes. Such actors do this, in many cases, within complex multi-level governance architectures, where different and sometimes competing national economic development agendas shape local action.ⁱⁱⁱ

We bring to this work - and indeed informing our recommendations of what should come next for city-region policy in Scotland – a recognition that outcomes from sub-national decentralisation are uneven across the OECD, with the institutional qualities at play key for achieving effective spatial policy^{iv}. Simply put, there is not a straight-line from more local devolution to higher local economic growth; what matters, rather, is whether institutions, across multi-levels, are of a high quality and working effectively^v. Whilst attention in the UK often drifts toward Greater Manchester^{vi} – and the positive claims made for this city-region – regional structures across the OECD exhibit a substantial degree of variety (and a wide range of local and central government roles and configurations are apparent in regional development policy).

Why should we be concerned about Scotland’s city-regions? – simply put, they contain a large chunk of the Scottish population and may play specific growth roles

within the wider Scottish and UK economies. City-regions can host dynamics, when managed effectively, that allow supply chains, labour markets and tacit knowledge processes to function effectively; and these processes hinge on the density and scale unique to cities. The basic concept to understand the operation of city-region economies here is agglomeration^{vii}.

Research also shows, drawing on analysis from the US, that complex tasks tend to locate in large cities^{viii}. Different settlement sizes support different firm activities too. It is apparent that large firms - requiring many hundreds of employees perhaps - will need to locate in a sizeable city-region to access a labour pool (so the firm can find the specialised workers needed to perform tasks).

Agglomeration economies sit within wider social processes and historical legacies – which shape entrepreneurial cultures and skills, for example – and these fundamentally contour the dynamics of a local economy. It is not automatic that dynamic agglomeration processes will be immediately realised, as these may remain latent, and here we point to the need for effective place-based policymaking to support local change. In other words, wider social processes may dampen or suppress the positive dynamics that agglomeration may otherwise support. For fast growing cities, agglomeration economies can be diminished by negative externalities (such as congestion).

In making a claim that our city-regions warrant concerted attention, we should also make it clear that we seek this not at the cost of, or to divert attention away from, Scotland's rural economies. Rather, our position is that **we need to better understand the interlinking systems and relationships between our rural and urban areas.** We know from the research base, for example, that young people are drawn to cities^{ix}; they move to cities for skills and education, and wider human capital advancement, and in several contexts this has been found to support an urban wage premium^x. At the same time, we know that the Covid shock has changed the world of work, and where people work across the week is now different for a number of (though not all) occupations^{xi}. Because of this, how rural and urban contexts interact may be shifting.

Scotland's city-regions are not large by global standards, so we should be cautious about the read across of particular dynamics. Nevertheless, the above serves to illustrate some of the core dimensions to consider with respect to urban economies and what roles they may serve within wider national systems.

In summary, we seek not to privilege city-regions in Scotland per se, but to make the point that they host (or can host) dynamics that are unique, that these can present opportunities, and thus they warrant policy attention. We need to ensure our city-regions are working effectively to secure sought-after growth and economic development for Scotland.

When we look the Scottish context, we see a highly varied set of economic trajectories for our city-regions at present.

Glasgow has a large and diverse economic base but continues to lag the best-performing parts of the UK on headline metrics, with persistent challenges around productivity and skills. Edinburgh stands out as the most affluent and knowledge intensive of the Scottish regions, with strong financial services, tech, data driven industries and tourism. Aberdeen, despite

notable economic pressures over the past decade, still records some of the highest GVA per capita and earnings in the UK, thanks largely to the energy sector. The Tay Cities economy is smaller and has historically underperformed other parts of the UK in GVA and employment growth, but points to developing strengths.

We should, of course, be aware that measurement issues present an ongoing challenge at the sub-national level, and issues of leakage out of city-region areas - and the impact of commuting movements, for example - are important to consider. Changes in wages and productivity (per hour worked) are typical indicators of concern in terms of developing a growth picture (the industrial strategy technical annex is useful here^{xii}), whilst the distributional consequences of such indicators feature within a concern for “inclusive growth”.

Beyond the headline picture, the following gives a brief overview of each city-region.

The Tay Cities – encompassing the urban cores of Dundee City and Perth, along with an expansive hinterland – has seen significant economic challenges over a number of decades. However, with **a notable and well publicised games economy in Dundee^{xiii}, and wider opportunities linked to agri-tech, clean energy and tourism taking in wider parts of the region** (amongst other domains set out in the growth prospectus^{xiv}), a firmer awareness and articulation of the city-region’s potential growth is now provided by policymakers. The Tay Cities Deal^{xv}, signed in late 2020, includes a series of interventions, from skills to areas of specific sectoral concern such as the International Barley Hub.

The economic context to the **Aberdeen City-region** is one of stark change. As reflected in recent economic strategies, recent Aberdeen Growth Panel Reports, and in the City-region Deal itself, **managing the transition to a more diversified economy, and considering the legacies of the oil and gas sector, will be critical to success.** Sustaining Aberdeen as an “Energy region”^{xvi}, albeit with an evolving composition of energy and green economy mix, including utilising key assets (such as Aberdeen Harbour) and the underlying skills base, will be crucial. The region is also seeking to diversify beyond the energy sector, including into sustainable tourism, life sciences and digital technologies. The City-region boasts a strong private sector base, alongside a history of collaboration between regional policymakers and industry that is relatively unique in Scotland.

The **Edinburgh city-region** sees growth strengths not otherwise exhibited in other parts of Scotland. Showing high relative productivity^{xvii}, with concentrations of activity in financial services, and a highly qualified workforce, Edinburgh has a number of strengths in the face of changing global trends. However, growth is at risk of being suppressed, with several pressures evident in terms of housing^{xviii} and transport^{xix}, and there remain substantial cleavages in economic outcomes across the city-region. **Edinburgh thus presents important questions about how policy supports Scotland’s fast-growing areas.**

The Glasgow city-region – the largest city-region in Scotland – has experienced radical change over the preceding three to four decades as a service economy has become the mainstay of the economy. Experiencing stark deindustrialisation prior, Glasgow can point to a number of sectoral opportunities now

– with the financial services^{xx} and space sectors given attention^{xxi} – whilst a number of higher education institutions promise positive local economic development impacts through innovation districts^{xxii}. Glasgow continues to see a stark bifurcation, with a large relative share of qualified workers and a large relative share (compared to other UK cities) of adults without a qualification^{xxiii}.

The Scottish steps with regional and city-regional policy

The past 10+ years have been one occupied by deal-making. City-region and Growth Deals are now widespread across Scotland and have been notable mechanisms for binding UK Government (UKG) and Scottish Government (SG) support behind city-regional and regional development priorities. Deals have evolved through time, and we can point to a wide range of projects and interventions agreed for different localities. In the four city-regions we investigated, the deal mechanism was the prime convening force for city-region working.

In a context of resource challenges and diminishing local authority balance sheets, many deals have been welcomed by local leaders in allowing them to take forward projects and interventions that may have otherwise not progressed (or at the same pace). Additionally, for several deals, co-operative working with neighbouring authorities has been advanced through the processes set out to agree and then implement a deal. Collaboration takes on new vertical dimensions too, with new reporting and governance channels established with both SG and UKG (e.g. at deal gateways).

Our research provided an opportunity for policymakers and stakeholders to look back and reflect on successes and challenges to date. Key reflections included:

An agreed vision – many of those we spoke to noted that an agreed vision for a city-region, as required by each deal, has been useful and has served to deepen – and establish new – relationships within and across local partners. In some cases, a vision of change for the region is now well recognised where it had not been previously, and working through the deal helped to support this. The deals also provided a vehicle and opening for local leaders to step up and make a case for their local areas. There was also recognition of deals helping, at the margin, to enable the marrying of local with national (both UK and Scotland) objectives.

Dispersed funding - One constraint on sticking to an agreed vision, it was remarked, was the ad hoc, competitive (at times) funding pots that regions have been compelled to respond to (often with short notice and tight deadlines). Such processes are not only inefficient but may inadvertently run counter to and undermine efforts to support a long-term regional vision agreed to by local partners. It was noted that this stood in contrast to long-term and predictable funding from core local government resources.

Collaborations – Agreeing then delivering on a deal was a driver for stronger partnership working across local authorities, universities, colleges, enterprise agencies, and, increasingly, civil society and business. This has strengthened trust and collaboration, sometimes overcoming political divides and building momentum for more coherent regional policymaking. The most positive legacy, in many instances, is not just in big-ticket projects, but in the relationships and trust established. Programme management teams for each of the deals have often played key roles here.

Beyond administrative boundaries - Deal working has allowed policymakers to acknowledge complex geographies and move to working across administrative boundaries. It makes little sense to focus on the City of Edinburgh Council or Glasgow City Council when interdependencies with other neighbouring administrations are so important for the functioning of the wider economy, most clearly via the labour market.

Governance - Joint committee structures involving elected members have generally worked well, it was remarked, with political leaders increasingly taking ownership of a deal and using it for regional advocacy. Deal-making has shifted focus away from the political cycle – and been resilient to changing political circumstances – opening up the potential to support longer-term thinking.

Looking ahead, and despite recognition of some positive progress, our research found a consensus that more was sought. Notably, **there is a strong desire for greater regional autonomy or regional influence over national policies** (from skills, planning, infrastructure and enterprise) regarding how such policies impact and align with the priorities of each city-region.

In this context, there is appetite for more regional decision-making authority, less centralised reporting/governance, and shorter approval timelines. Bureaucracy and slow processes - especially around infrastructure – are regarded as barriers. For infrastructure, furthermore, more flexible financing tools and joined-up planning with other government bodies warrants consideration. There is broad agreement on the need for a second phase of policymaking focussed upon skills development and for more revenue-based, regionally controlled or

influenced approaches. **Strengthening local Institutional capacity** is a critical factor too, and the SG's November announcement is worth noting here^{xxiv}.

This then raises the question of how and on what grounds future regional and city-regional working can be secured?

Negotiating tripartite governance

A unique feature of the regional development discussion in Scotland, and the other devolved nations, is the tripartite nature of policymaking. That is, regional development involves the Scottish Government, UK Government and local authorities. This presents a different dynamic and complexity vis-à-vis the discussions in England.

To date, this tripartite governance configuration has not been given much explicit attention. As some of us have argued previously, for many years the UK Government's approach may have been – at least partially – characterised as “devolve and forget”^{xxv}, whereby powers were handed down, but limited consideration was given to how the powers would work within a multi-level governance system. At the same time, there is certainly the sense amongst those we engaged with through our research that the Scottish Government has centralised powers at Holyrood, often at the expense of autonomies to localities^{xxvi}. The upshot has been little in the way of sustained dialogue around how sub-national working is arranged and configured.

However, in more recent years, tools have emerged – from Investment Zones through to Innovation Accelerators and City-region Deals – that see the UK Government directly engaging localities where convenient to do so. The result is a complex three-way working environment, where politics of the day may trump the coherent design of regional development policy.

There has been a recent uptick of interest in the mayoral discussion in Scotland, with a number of advocates suggesting that they are needed so our city-regions do not miss out on the advantages afforded to English cities, such as Greater Manchester^{xxvii}. Some of our workshop participants and discussants pointed to the advantages of a mayoral figure who can offer leadership and direction to a sub-national economy, and, importantly, provide a point of accountability.

We think this suggestion warrants consideration, albeit we should tread cautiously. Economic policy history is scattered with promises of simple solutions to complex problems. Our caution stems from the fact that the tripartite arrangements here in Scotland would present a complex operating environment for a mayor. Furthermore, we must consider that the political dynamics confronting an emboldened mayor in a small nation (such as Scotland) is different from what we see in England. We should learn from some of the steps observed in other contexts (and monitor the evolving evidence base), certainly, but be thoughtful and critical when seeking to apply a model to the Scottish context. We note the Scottish First Minister in late November 2025 suggested that he is not in favour of a mayoral model.

Our recommendation, initially, is to progress a tiered regional development framework (as set out earlier in this document) that gives a line of sight to Scottish city-regions

on what may come next, and how new autonomies can be balanced with new accountabilities (indeed, autonomies and accountabilities need to move together).

Crucially, the framework could be based on concerted, iterative dialogue between the UK Government and Scottish Government as to where approaches align initially (considering UKG's industrial strategy^{xxviii} and SG's green industrial strategy^{xxix}, for example). This may then provide the basis to consider what a set of mutually agreeable regional policy steps could look like (be it in the form of funding or regulation etc). We might suggest the domains of skills and enterprise policies - subsumed within a wider industrial strategy focus - could be a useful, potential common ground to start with, before expanding out to other domains (transport, housing, etc).

Though the framework we propose will never be a panacea, and constitutional frictions will likely rumble on for the foreseeable future, **moving to a framework that articulates common points offers to lift-up the debate on regional development in Scotland beyond short term political contestation** (and secure a longer-term approach to regional policy).

Toward a purposive 10 years ahead – a suggestion

For regional development to work effectively in Scotland, effective tripartite arrangements are needed. Whilst political and constitutional differences of opinion will always exist, the nature of devolution, local government and regional economic geography make collaboration vital.

To support this relational working, we believe that there is merit in thinking about a three-tier system, analogous to the England Devolution framework, to be agreed by UKG and SG. We argue that **a local growth plan could effectively act as the mechanism to develop and design** this tiering, allowing city-regions to determine, first, what they feel is needed and necessary.

In developing this approach, steps are needed to build on the existing arrangements, thereby providing some stability, which we know is key to successful economic development. Too often, new initiatives fail to learn the lessons from before or elsewhere. In our view, **working toward a growth plan, as we see being encouraged in England, would be a useful first step to take.** This will help to cement partnership working and consensus building which has been a feature of the first decade of city-region dealmaking. At the same time as growth plans are being worked on, we believe the UK Government and Scottish Government should move to develop and articulate a trilateral devolution framework that offers a responsiveness to the different needs of Scotland's four major city-regions; this should confront questions about what is happening at different governance levels now and what could be happening to strengthen regional working.

More specifically, there may be merit in thinking about deconcentration in Scotland^{xxx}, given the complex governance landscape; that is, how current national level working (both UKG and SG led) can take a firmer regional perspective. Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Transport Scotland, for example, all have significant roles shaping the different

regions of Scotland, so any emboldened city-regional working will have to interface with such organisations effectively.

As we look to the next stage of city-region economic development in Scotland, there is an opportunity to establish a more strategic and defined role for city-region policymakers within national agencies. In doing so, this could help to establish a less transactional dynamic and move towards a more balanced distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities.

New deals or other follow-on arrangements for the city-regions can conceive of multi-level governance agreements in new ways beyond existing dealmaking. As we have argued, there is a benefit in moving away from a top-down imposition of contractual governance to get local authorities to do what the national government wants and/or to plug holes in local funding. Provided that there is a commitment to partnership working, and it is possible to develop the revised governance approaches set out above, it is possible to view future ‘deals’ as tools to support regional economic development that local, regional and national government equally input into and sign up to. In doing so, they can set out what should be done locally, regionally and nationally; give greater regional autonomy/influence over current national policies (e.g. skills, housing and transport); and give politicians more of a framework to deliver against national ambitions. They can also create an accountability for national government to act in the interests of localities, rather than the other way around predominantly (the locality as supplicant).

Summary points:

- Regional development policy has been relatively modest and ad hoc in Scotland over the last two decades, though a number of positive aspects have emerged from deal-making.
- Sub-national devolution does not automatically lead to economic growth; how institutions work is key.
- Scotland’s economic development landscape is cluttered. We seek not to add more, but rather to consider how, for regional development purposes, existing bodies can work together more effectively.
- Effective regional development policy in Scotland will require some coming together and agreement between UKG and SG; finding existing common ground, perhaps through the industrial strategy, offers a way forward here.
- On Mayors – maybe later; let’s see? Trilateralism is complex, so parties need to agree in the coming years on what accountability for autonomy looks like in the Scottish regional context. Our framework suggests a way forward.

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ⁱ <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsae047>

ⁱⁱ <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2023.2167972>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2022.2050201>

^{iv} See here - <https://doi.org/10.1068/a44267> and - <https://academic.oup.com/joeg/article/11/4/619/918617>

^v <https://academic.oup.com/joeg/article/22/1/1/6295750?login=false>

^{vi} See here - <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2023.1179181/full> and here - <https://academic.oup.com/cjres/article-abstract/9/2/355/1745137?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

^{vii} <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/6667/mier-agglomeration.pdf>

^{viii} <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0803-3>

^{ix} The interaction of confidence-young people is given here - <https://academic.oup.com/jeea/article/21/2/690/6652214?login=false>

^x Urban wage premiums are considered here - <https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/84/1/106/2669971> and

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0166046214000611?via%3Dihub>

^{xi} On hybrid working see for example - <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/121377/1/dp1925.pdf>

^{xii} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68585f10c9b3bb1663ab9072/industrial_strategy_technical_annex.pdf

^{xiii} <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/does-dundee-really-have-a-gaming-cluster/>

^{xiv} [https://www.taycities.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-](https://www.taycities.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/Tay%20Cities%20Region%20Prospectus%20for%20Regional%20Growth%20%282%29.pdf)

[12/Tay%20Cities%20Region%20Prospectus%20for%20Regional%20Growth%20%282%29.pdf](https://www.taycities.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/Tay%20Cities%20Region%20Prospectus%20for%20Regional%20Growth%20%282%29.pdf)

^{xv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tay-cities-region-deal>

^{xvi} <https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s144408/RES%20Appx1%20-%20RES%202035%20Final%20Draft.pdf>

^{xvii} <https://www.productivity.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/PIP045-Scotland-Insights-Paper-January-2025.pdf>

^{xviii} <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/housing/housing-emergency-action-plan>

^{xix} <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/33128/public-transport-action-plan-2030-april-2023->

<https://glasgowcityregion.co.uk/our-region/business/>

^{xx} <https://glasgowcityregion.co.uk/what-we-do/investment-zone/>

^{xxi} <https://glasgowcityregion.co.uk/accelerating-our-innovation-economy/>

^{xxii} https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/09/future-proofing-the-skills-system-in-the-glasgow-city-region-scotland-united-kingdom_39145315/5f36b5db-en.pdf

^{xxiii} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/glasgow-state-of-the-city-economy-conference/>

^{xxiv} <https://www.productivity.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Joining-Up-Pro-Productivity-Policies.pdf>

^{xxv} See claims also made here - <https://ourscottishfuture.org/devolution-deals-backed-for-scottish-regions/>

^{xxvi} See, amongst others, here - <https://www.holyrood.com/news/view,directlyelected-mayors-needed-in-scotland-to-improve-transparency> and here - <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/glasgow-needs-devolution-and-it-needs-a-metro-mayor/>

^{xxvii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy>

^{xxviii} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/green-industrial-strategy/>

^{xxix} See for a consideration of deconcentration, here -

https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2019/03/making-decentralisation-work_g1g9faa7/g2g9faa7-en.pdf