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Local Digital Index **2024**

Case Study | **Glasgow City Region**

Building Stronger Local Economies



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Glasgow's technology ecosystem goes from strength to strength, with numerous success stories continuing to emerge from across the City Region. The collaboration between local government, industry, the academic sector, our innovation districts and entrepreneurial support organisations has driven growth in one of Europe's most innovative and dynamic city regions. Startups and scaleups alike have benefitted from a truly supportive environment with good access to early-stage capital, a highly skilled talent pool and public funding to drive market square activity.

Digitalisation and innovation are already fundamental to Glasgow's economic and social fabric and will become even more so in the years ahead. There is huge potential to expand and enhance public services, addressing grassroots and city-wide agendas with solutions delivered by local startups – at the same time reaching those across metropolitan Glasgow still excluded from the digital agenda.

Given the emphasis on growth and place within the UK Government's recent Industrial Strategy Green Paper, a strong working relationship with techUK and its membership is critical in advocating for the catalytic role of tech as a driver of growth and social progress - one that strengthens economic prosperity, productivity and resilience across the Nations and Regions.

It's an opportunity for collaboration across the UK's metropolitan areas on approaches to help build stronger local economies while leveraging the full potential of our people and places. ”



**Councillor Susan Aitken, Chair of the Glasgow City Region Cabinet
and Leader of Glasgow City Council**

We are spotlighting the Glasgow City Region in our Local Digital Index 2024 as it stands out for its rapidly growing digital economy and its key strengths:

- Digital skills, backed by strategic initiatives
- Innovation capability and infrastructure
- Rolling out digital infrastructure
- Broad and emerging cluster of excellence
- Universities and Colleges
- Innovation Districts
- Attracting investment

These strengths position the Glasgow City Region as a hub for technological advancement and economic growth, creating a competitive and dynamic environment for both local businesses and global enterprises looking to invest and grow in the UK.

The region's **key priorities** include:

- Growing the commercial financial sector
- Building collaboration with key players such as Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Government, local universities and colleges and tech non-profit organisations

This collaborative approach ensures that regional development aligns with both economic growth and social impact goals and creates a shared vision for a thriving region.

Innovation economy supports the development of clusters exploiting the established core regional strengths in:

- Advanced Manufacturing,
- Digital & Enabling Technology
- Health & Life Sciences

In 2023, Glasgow's technology ecosystem has flourished, becoming one of the UK's fastest-growing regions, with a collective enterprise value surpassing £4 billion. Startups and scaleups benefit from robust early-stage capital, skilled talent, and public funding, all supported by strong collaboration between local government, innovation districts, and entrepreneurial organisations. Universities play a key role, with nearly 30% of the region's enterprise value stemming from academic spinouts, and early-stage investment—especially in breakout stages—reaching record highs.





Building a strong local digital ecosystem

Glasgow City Region (which consists of East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City Council, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire) and particularly Glasgow City Council (GCC) are continuously creating and developing strong tech and digital ecosystems, and both have local strategies underpinned by digital strategies and initiatives such as:

- [GCC Digital Glasgow Strategy](#)
The updated Digital Glasgow Strategy (2024-30) emphasises the role of digital technology in transforming Glasgow's digital economy, social life, and council services. Unlike the previous version (2018-23), which focused on specific digital transformation programs, the new strategy prioritises outcomes, aiming to make Glasgow more inclusive, digitally skilled, and efficient. Its key missions include creating a fair digital society, fostering an inclusive digital economy, and building sustainable public services. Rooted in values like inclusivity, transparency, and collaboration,

this strategy seeks to drive organisational change, leveraging digital advancements while safeguarding citizens' rights and accessibility.

- [Glasgow City Regional Economic Strategy](#)

This strategy was created in partnership with eight councils and government stakeholders, to build an innovative economy and it focuses on land use and sustainability, infrastructure and assets, inward investment and economic growth, tourism, transport and connectivity, enterprise, skills and employment, housing and equalities. The strategy aims to support the development of the region to become the most innovative, inclusive and resilient economy in the UK by 2030.

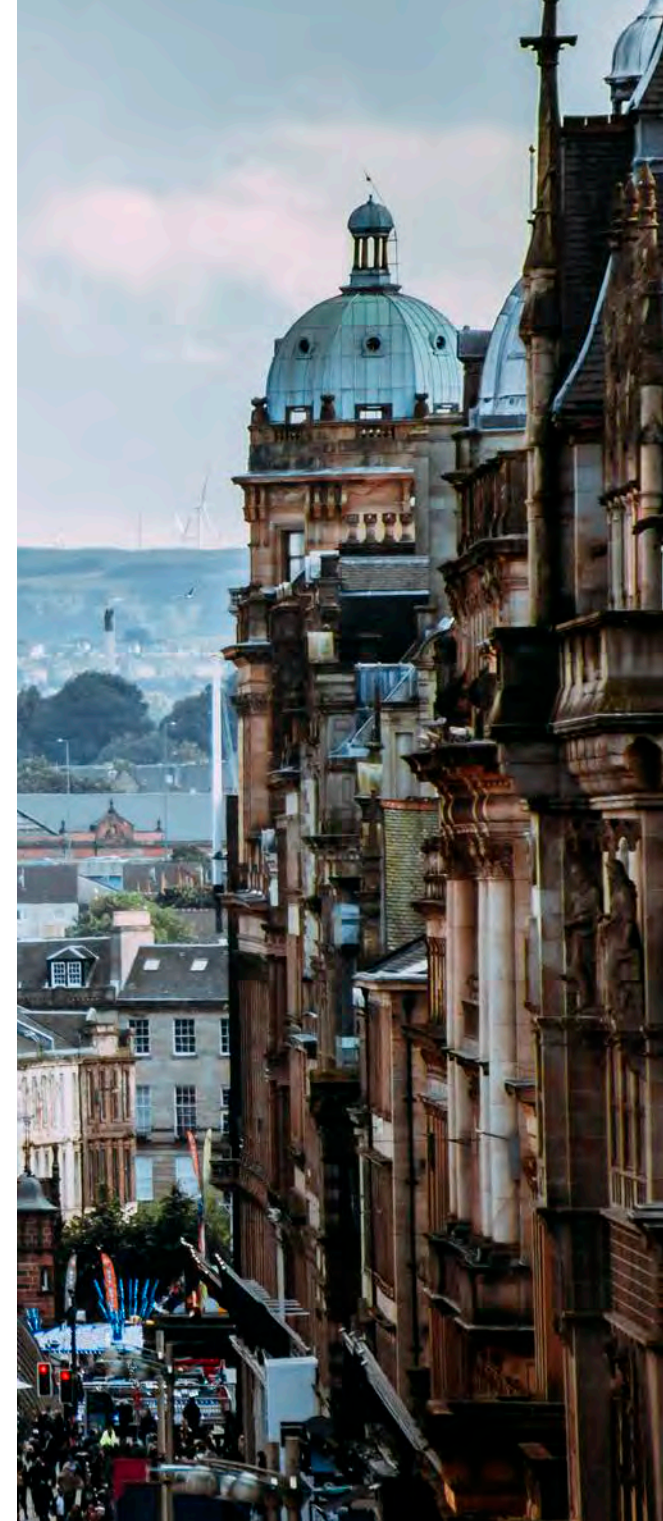
- [GCR Intelligence Hub](#)

This hub includes a range of economic intelligence related services, such as analysis, policy research, economic modelling, strategy development and project evaluation for the City Region and the City Deal. It's focused on the same areas identified in the Glasgow City Regional Economic Strategy such as inward investment, economic growth etc.

These strategies and resources are a testament to the region's dedication to foster a resilient, innovative, and inclusive Glasgow City Region, with the aim to transform Glasgow into a digitally advanced, economically robust, and socially inclusive region by 2030, with a strong focus on sustainable growth, innovation, and equitable opportunities for all citizens and communities.

Part of the Scottish Government, the Economic Development Directorate houses a Digital Economy team whose function is to maximise the benefits of leveraging digital technology to support a sustainable and growing economy as identified in both the Glasgow Digital Strategy and the [Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review](#) by:

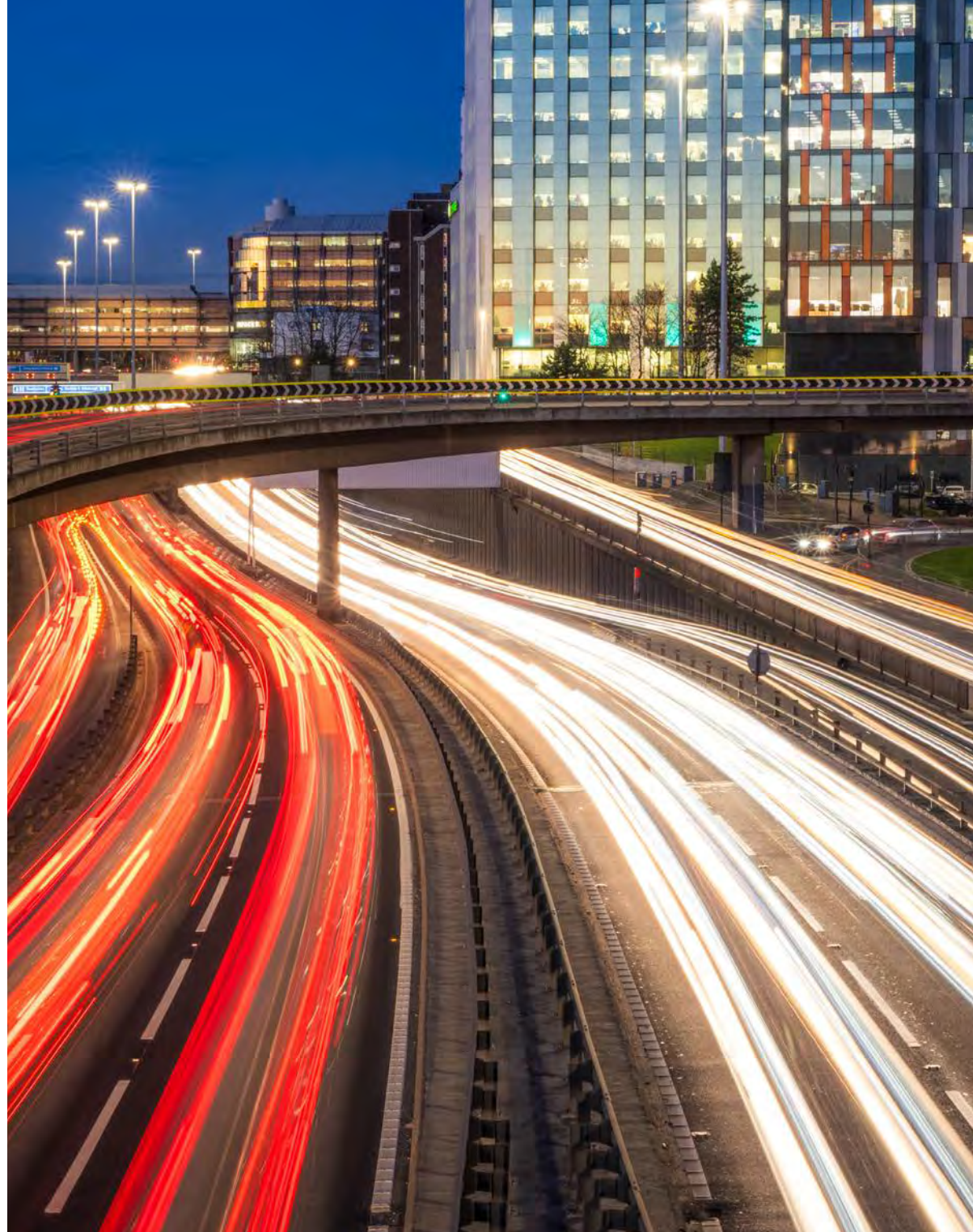
- Improving the availability, capacity, and quality of digital connectivity
- Developing the pipeline of digital skills, providing opportunities for all
- Identifying opportunities and designing interventions to promote, build and enable the rapidly growing regional tech ecosystem.



Digital and tech innovation driving transformation

The Glasgow City Region is identifying opportunities and designing interventions to promote, build and enable the rapidly growing regional tech ecosystem. The region is driving transformation and fostering innovation across its industries and sectors through various innovation programmes across the region such as:

- [Glasgow City Innovation District](#), an initiative led by the University of Strathclyde. This programme aligns with and is complemented by the national focus on tech innovation via the [Tech Scaler Network](#) (which provides tailored support across Scotland to anyone who is building a startup), and [Barclays Eagle Labs](#) (who are an entrepreneurial network supporting startups and scaleups).



- [Glasgow City Region Innovation Accelerator](#), as Glasgow City region is one of the three pilot area across the UK to share £100 million government funding (alongside Greater Manchester and West Midlands), to develop a new innovation and research accelerator, and positions Glasgow as being one of the most innovative cities in the world. This programme is aimed at tackling regional disparities across the UK by bringing R&D levels and productivity up to the level of London and the south-east of England and promoting more rapid development and market entry of industry-led innovation.
 - [Glasgow City Region Innovation Action Plan](#), a partnership between Glasgow City Region, Scottish Enterprise and Innovate UK, to ensure the region's focus on innovation continues and provides further economic growth opportunities. The plan aims to use the established regional strengths and provide a strategic focus for innovation.
 - [Entrepreneurial Campus](#), is a programme of work led by Ross Tuffee and Professor Joe Little, and it looks at how to integrate entrepreneurship into post 16 education institutions to help support the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), the [Scottish technology ecosystem: review](#), and ambitions for entrepreneurship and innovation in Scotland.
- Glasgow's Innovation Districts integrate researchers, high-growth firms, and creative startups into walkable, collaborative hubs, focusing on emerging fields like cleantech, advanced manufacturing, precision medicine, and fintech. This model, proven to boost productivity, job creation, and investment, includes three districts: the Glasgow City Innovation District (GCID), Scotland's first, in central Glasgow; the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District (GRID), spanning from the University of Glasgow to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital; and the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland (AMIDS), near Glasgow Airport. Glasgow City Council has allocated £1.8 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to further support development and SME activity both GCID and GRID Districts.

"The techUK Digital Index report underscores Glasgow's incredible ascent in the UK's tech sector. Our city's total commitment to fostering innovation and collaboration has positioned us as a leading international hub for digital, deeptech, science and engineering excellence. With the combined value of Glasgow City's tech startups exceeding £4.1B and spinouts exceeding £1.2B in 2024, this growth not only reflects the hard work of our tech community but also sets a promising trajectory and clear direction for the future advancement of Glasgow's innovation economy."

Alisdair Gunn, Director - Glasgow City Innovation District



[The Glasgow City Tech Ecosystem Platform](#), an open-access database powered by Dealroom, maps the city's tech ecosystem and supports data-driven insights. It offers real-time data on startups, accelerators, and meetups, helping connect startups with investors and corporates, and won the 2023 City Nation Place Award for Best Use of Data. This platform has positioned Glasgow as a top tech cluster, enhancing international investment and economic growth.

Glasgow's regional tech ecosystem is now the UK's 3rd and Europe's 5th fastest growing in terms of Venture Capital investment growth, with its startup and scaleup landscape valued at over £4 billion in combined enterprise value. This is also shaped by the support for Financial Services and FinTech in Glasgow and organisations such as Glasgow International Financial Business District, Scottish Financial Enterprise and FinTech Scotland, are working to support skills and innovation in the financial sector - a large part of which is tech focused, with challenges around the skills shortages faced by financial services companies. There is also specific support for the fintech community through [FinTech Scot](#), for startups and scaleups, incubators and tech spaces, funding, skills, with a focus on Glasgow.

Glasgow City Region's £160m Investment Zone is one of two new Scottish Investment Zones to benefit from investment, tax reliefs and other incentives over ten years for a package of local projects which will further boost the innovation economy.

[The Financial Regulation Innovation Lab \(FRIL\)](#) is an industry-driven program led by Fintech Scotland, collaborating with the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, DSIT, Innovate UK, and Glasgow City Region to advance technology's role in shaping future financial regulations. In 2023, Glasgow's startups, especially in healthtech, saw record equity investment nearing [£200 million](#), with health-related fields like biotechnology and medtech, representing over half this total. Health startups, largely spun out from local universities, are now valued at £1.1 billion, contributing 27% to the regional ecosystem's enterprise value, placing Glasgow 15th in Europe for healthtech investment.

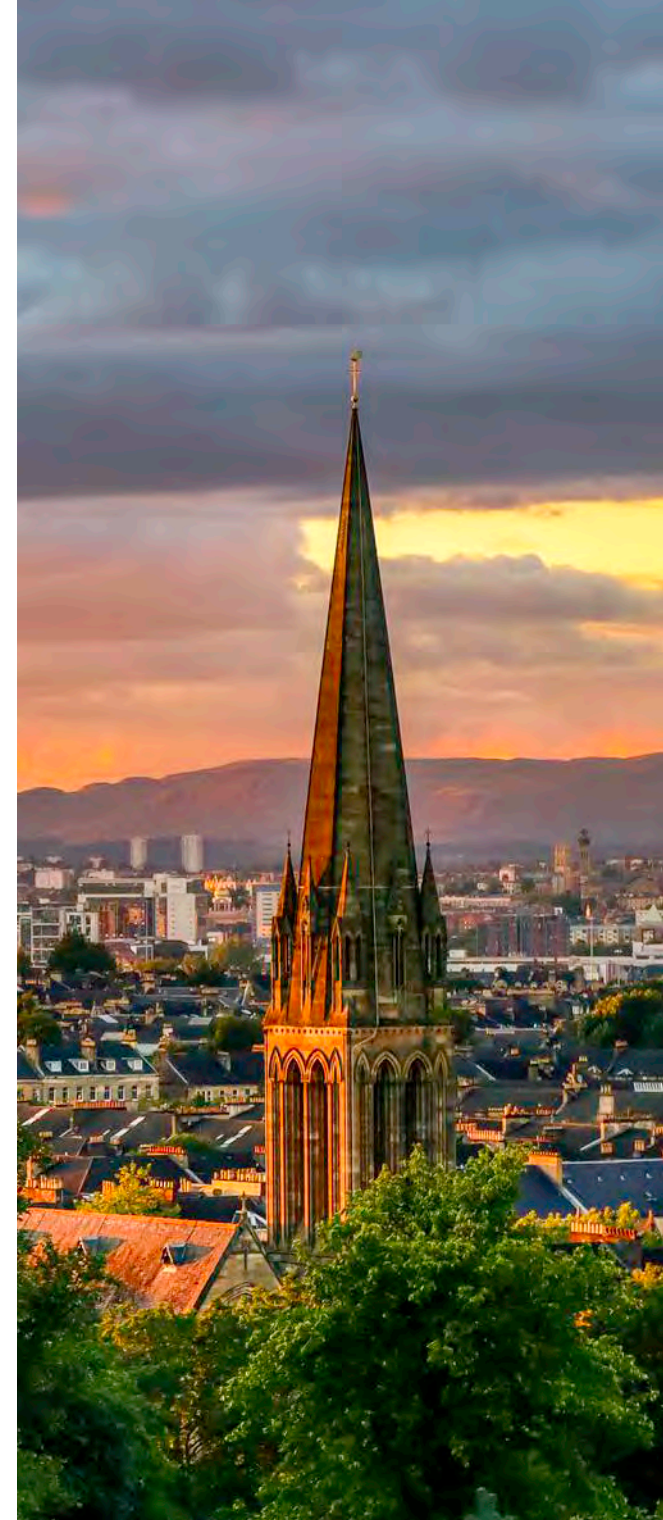
It's important to mention examples of excellence such as Glasgow's regional space cluster which builds on nearly 20 years of expertise in space engineering and manufacturing to strengthen Scotland's and the UK's space capabilities. With a concentration of companies across the space

supply chain, Glasgow is recognised as the world's leading small satellite manufacturing hub outside California. Glasgow's climate tech ecosystem is also expanding, with expertise in waste management, circular economy, the built environment, and satellite technology. Local climate tech companies are developing solutions in energy efficiency, waste reduction, biodiversity enhancement, pollution monitoring, and renewable energy—leveraging data analytics, IoT, and patented technologies to address climate change and produce carbon-free electricity from waste heat, wind, and wave energy.

Nafeesa Dajda, Director National Capability at the Satellite Applications Catapult said:

"The Space Sector in Scotland provides a complete end to end value chain for the space sector, from launch to satellite manufacturing and satellite data analysis and exploitation. Space Scotland forms a significant part of the UK Space Ecosystem, which enables innovation and growth across the UK in collaboration with local partners."

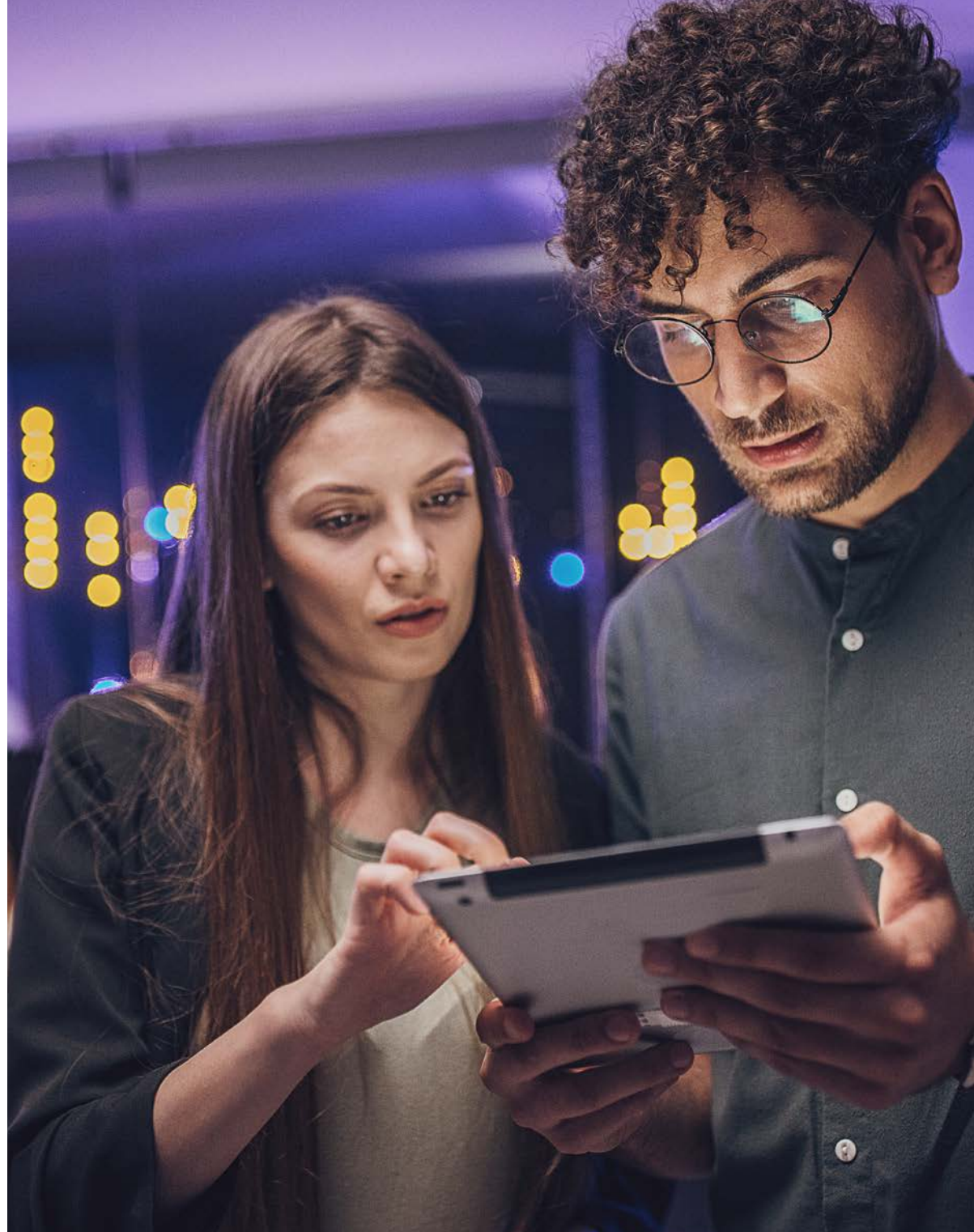
As shown in our Local Digital Index 2024, in Glasgow City, the number of funded businesses with access to private investment is 169, and for Glasgow City Region is 236, the number of businesses which received Innovate UK funding in Glasgow City is 338, and in Glasgow City Regions is 563, which allows businesses to invest in technology and talent and boost their regional digital economy. The innovation intensity for all sectors in Glasgow City is 7.74% and for the Glasgow City Regions Deal is 6.89%. The percentage of innovative companies in Glasgow City in the digital sector is 22.21%. In Scotland, there is a total spend of £4.8 billion for R&D, with £186 million from Government and UKRI funding, £1.8 billion in higher education, £2.7 billion in business enterprises, and £85 million in private non-profit organisations.



Digital skills and inclusivity for a future-ready workforce

The development of digital skills has long been a cornerstone of Glasgow City Region's economic strategy, underpinning efforts to create a resilient and adaptable workforce that meets the demands of a rapidly evolving tech and innovation landscape, providing opportunities for all. This focus has led to a high degree of integration across industries, educational institutions, and government initiatives, fostering strong partnerships. As a result, Glasgow City Region is well equipped with a talent pipeline, contributing not only to local economic growth but also to its appeal as an investment destination with a skilled and capable workforce which can support innovation and digital transformation.

The Glasgow City Region uses digital and tech innovation to create a resilient and thriving communities by taking on initiatives such as the Digital Glasgow Young Person's Guarantee (DGYPG) and [Glasgow Code Learning](#),



Code Your Future and Code Division programmes which supports refugees, focus on best practice for Scottish Apprenticeships, GCU Digital Skills Academy/Women Do Cyber career changer programme, digital Inclusion initiatives including schools iPad roll out and key pillars from the GCC strategy (fair and empowered digital society, an inclusive digital economy, sustainable and innovative digital public services). Glasgow Life's Glasgow Code Learning (GCL) program, in partnership with Glasgow Clyde College, provides accessible digital skills training for individuals facing educational and employment barriers. Supported by Glasgow City Council and CGI, GCL offers flexible, no-cost courses that are SQA accredited, covering foundational digital skills, AI, data science, software development, and cyber security. With additional one-on-one mentoring and employability support, GCL has successfully engaged minority groups, offering accelerated career pathways in the digital tech sector.

Launched in 2019, "Tech Industry in the Classroom" brought tech professionals into Glasgow's secondary schools to develop cyber security content (Cyber NPA) and later expanded to cover data skills and other tech areas. Originally in-person, the program shifted online during COVID,

generating lasting materials, "meet the expert" sessions, and live tech lessons that continue to benefit students. It evolved into a broader initiative promoting tech industry engagement in curriculum and extracurricular activities, bridging the gap between industry needs and tech education. This collaboration between the public sector, industry, and education highlights both the complexity of closing the tech skills gap and the impact of sustained, multi-year partnerships.

The further education sector in Glasgow City Region is also enhancing regional innovation by uniting six colleges to establish College Local Innovation Centres (CLIC), funded by Innovate UK. This 12-month pilot project aims to support local businesses in adopting digital technologies, with specialised Innovation Centres focused on boosting digital innovation and productivity aligned with regional economic goals.

Partners and stakeholders across Glasgow City Region work closely with [Skills Development Scotland](#) (SDS) to ensure that regional strategies complement and support national strategies and vice-versa. An example is the partnership Working with CivTech and co-sponsor DataLab alongside national agency Skills Development Scotland

(SDS) and other partners on Challenge 10.5 set by CivTech to see a technical solution from the market to provide real-time insight around the demand and supply of professional digital skills for Glasgow City Region against current and future needs of industry. This kind of work has the potential to enhance and inform techUK's own Index work, providing valuable insights and setting a strong benchmark for other regions to follow. These initiatives not only showcase the innovative strengths of individual regions but also promote best practices that can be adapted and scaled nationwide, contributing to a more cohesive and competitive national tech landscape.

[The Digital Economy Skills Action Plan 2023-2028](#) is a key delivery mechanism for developing tech skills across Scotland, and it aims to create opportunities for all young people to gain digital economy skills, to improve the evidence base of current and future digital skills needs, to improve digital leadership skills of SMEs, to ensure more skills and employment opportunities, and to rapidly increase the acquisition of digital skills through upskilling and reskilling.

There is also a triple helix approach of working in Glasgow City Region across academic research, commercial enterprise and government (local and



national), with examples including the strategic partnership between industry, universities and the NHS in a health technology context.

Over the past two years, [SmartSTEMs](#), in collaboration with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life, has provided STEM-focused digital learning initiatives to inspire Glasgow's youth toward STEM careers. Initially reaching 25 primary schools, the program expanded in phase two to include libraries and secondary schools in underserved areas, promoting equal access to STEM learning opportunities across the city.

The [Digital Glasgow Young Person's Guarantee](#) (DGYPG) builds on Glasgow's pioneering employability model and the national Young Person's Guarantee, aiming to boost tech skills and career prospects for young people. A partnership between Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life, Skills Development Scotland, Kelvin College, and tech SMEs, the program targets 16–24-year-olds, especially those facing barriers to learning, providing SCQF-accredited tech training, employability support, and career guidance. With funding from JPMorgan Chase and later GCC, participants gain skills for tech careers or further study through activities like employer

engagements, entrepreneurship sessions, and tailored career advice. Recently extended to support unemployed adults, DGYPG strengthens Glasgow's tech talent pipeline and fosters inclusion in the tech workforce.

There also needs to be a recognition of local strengths in quantum technologies, with new UK government funding support for the University of Glasgow to work on timing and navigation systems, representing key elements of local work for sovereign capability.

As shown in our Local Digital Index 2024, in Glasgow City Region, there are over 20 700 STEM job postings, with a percentage of 22.7% digital roles advertised.

Digital infrastructure for enhanced connectivity

When it comes to digital infrastructure, Glasgow City Region's focus is to improve the availability, capacity, and quality of digital connectivity. In November 2023, Glasgow City Region was selected as one of ten UK regions to participate in the national [5G Innovation Regions initiative](#), receiving a share of £36 million in UK Government funding. This support is designated to advance Glasgow's digital transformation across several ambitious projects, aiming to improve connectivity, streamline services, and enhance quality of life for residents. Glasgow City Region's participation emphasises the drive towards leveraging connectivity and data to foster safer, healthier, and more connected communities.



Glasgow City Council established Europe's first [Telecoms Unit](#) to enhance collaboration with the telecom sector and boost digital connectivity investment across the region. This pioneering approach won the 'Barrier Removal Award' at Connected Britain 2024 for effectively removing infrastructure deployment barriers and fostering public-private collaboration.

Glasgow City Region's 5G initiative is driven by four strategic priorities: addressing inequalities by connecting key social assets to ensure equitable access; reducing digital poverty to break cycles of exclusion and its socioeconomic effects; reimagining health and care through digital solutions that enhance efficiency and personalisation; and driving sustainable social, environmental, and economic outcomes to position Glasgow as a model for urban digital transformation.

"Other examples of external investment in innovation ecosystem through successful funding bids by universities and businesses in partnership with Glasgow City Region include a new programme of support for the photonics sector from UKRI, the establishment of Scotland's

5G centre, University of Strathclyde's partnership in four out of five of the new UK-wide Quantum Technology Hubs, and the growth of the largest 'smart things' hub in Europe at Skypark from the Smart Things Accelerator Centre (STAC). The STAC facility will serve as an accelerator for the burgeoning 'smart things' industry, providing the opportunity for Glasgow to become a global leader in emerging technologies such as drones, robotics, AI, IoT, nanotech, medtech and cleantech over the next few decades.

Glasgow is also one of the locations where BT and Small Business Britain have brought together small business owners over the past year to share ideas and discuss common challenges on one of their [Netwalks](#). Each network is a unique opportunity to connect, learn and thrive. Participants come together to foster a supporting community while enjoying fresh air and taking time out of their everyday routine. AI, social media strategies, and funding opportunities have been the theme of other recent network walks while the walk in Kelvingrove Park in September gave Glasgow entrepreneurs the chance to discuss how to integrate sustainability into their business strategies.

Chris Sims, Chief Commercial Officer, BT Business said:

"Small businesses have huge potential to grow local economies, but it's important they get the right support to increase productivity and scale their operations. Our Netwalks programme, in collaboration with Small Business Britain, is designed to give the nation's entrepreneurs a space where they can collaborate and share ideas amongst each other, while also receiving expert guidance on topics including sustainability, cybersecurity, and technology adoption."

There are also other key focused projects to highlight which support the strengthening of the region's digital infrastructure and connectivity:

- [CityFibre network roll out](#) – Glasgow was the first city in the UK to have a full fibre upgrade and CityFibre's full-fibre network rollout is transforming digital connectivity for homes and businesses in Glasgow, enabling access to faster, more reliable broadband that will support future needs. This state-of-the-art



infrastructure provides speeds of up to 1,000 Mbps and near-limitless bandwidth, enhancing productivity and innovation potential.

- [UK 5G network](#) – One of the testbeds for the 5G network was developed in Glasgow, which was part of the 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme. These projects accelerated the development of high-performance 5G networks.

As shown in our Local Digital Index 2024, the Superfast broadband availability is of 98% in Glasgow City and the gigabit availability is of 89.3%, whilst 5G network coverage is 96.88%.

Looking ahead, Glasgow's tech ecosystem is well-positioned to continue its trajectory of growth and innovation. With strong foundations in collaboration across industry, academia, and government, the city region is prepared to leverage its strengths in data science, digital infrastructure, and sustainable technology.

Read more in our Local Digital Index 2024, to look at the data which shows Glasgow Region's strengths and opportunities, being a region which is nurturing talent, supporting startups, and driving impactful research, and being set to become a leading hub for tech advancement in the UK.

About techUK

techUK is a membership organisation that brings together people, companies and organisations to realise the positive outcomes of what digital technology can achieve. We collaborate across business, Government and stakeholders to fulfil the potential of technology to deliver a stronger society and more sustainable future. By providing expertise and insight, we support our members, partners and stakeholders as they prepare the UK for what comes next in a constantly changing world.



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