CLYDE MISSION STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN

STAGE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT
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Clyde Mission Strategic Masterplan – Stage 1 Summary Report

Clyde Mission has been described as the greatest development opportunity in western Europe. Launched in 2020 with the aim of: "*making the Clyde an engine of sustainable and inclusive growth for the city, the region, and for Scotland*".

Given the scale and complexity of the Clyde corridor, covering a long geographic area (135 km long) and a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues, the Clyde Mission Strategic Masterplan (CMSM) brief recognised a clear risk: that an investment-focused programme could become fragmented, overwhelming, and ultimately undeliverable.
The purpose of the CMSM is therefore to bring clarity and focus, setting out a prioritised programme of transformational projects, supported by a clear route map to delivery and a robust business case for investment. This programme will be informed by engagement with communities, partners and stakeholders, ensuring it reflects shared priorities for the river corridor.

Clyde Mission is a national development priority, led by Glasgow City Region and Argyll and Bute Council, in partnership with the Scottish Government. The CMSM is being developed by an AtkinsRéalis led team, supported by Kevin Murray Associates and Austin-Smith:Lord as co-lead strategic masterplanners, with additional expertise from Ryden, Nick Skelton Economics, Stephen Willacy and Vincent Goodstadt.

The CMSM is being developed alongside stakeholders and communities through a two-stage engagement process. This summary focuses on the outcomes of Stage 1, which aimed to raise awareness, build a shared understanding of the Clyde corridor, and gather early ideas and priorities. Stage 1 engagement primarily focused on stakeholders and key partners, while Stage 2 will be more public facing and will include wider community engagement.

Stage 1 engagement activities included:

- An online launch event;
- Six thematic online workshops across diverse subjects with expert presentations and input;
- Five field studies along the river corridor from the Rural Clyde to the Firth of Clyde;
- 1 to 1 engagement with Peel Waters Development (property and ports), MOD, SEPA and Scottish Waters; and
- Feedback forms, which were available at events and online throughout Stage 1

Stage 1 engagement brought together approximately 393 participants, including the masterplan team, across the coordinated programme of activity. This included around 80 participants at the online launch event, over 200 attendees across the six thematic workshops, the five 1to1 engagement meeting and approximately 108 participants engaged through field studies along the full 135 kilometre length of the river corridor, from the Rural Clyde to the Firth of Clyde.

This combination of engagement activities enabled a rich dialogue, deepening understanding of the physical and social character of the corridor, and generating valuable insights into local challenges, ambitions and priorities. These have been combined with analysis of existing plans, policies and strategies, as well as activities undertaken by Clyde Mission since its inception.

Stage 1 engagement demonstrated strong enthusiasm for the opportunities associated with the CMSM, alongside clear recognition of the challenges facing the Clyde corridor. Many participants highlighted the importance of clarity of purpose and careful prioritisation, given the size and complexity of the study area, to ensure the Strategic Masterplan is coherent, focused and capable of delivering meaningful impact.



Figure 1 Image from field study 1: urban central Clyde

Drawing from across all of these engagement elements, several key themes emerged:

Need for Strategic Purpose and Added Value

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need for the Clyde Mission to provide clear strategic additionality. There was strong agreement that the masterplan should not replicate existing strategies but should act as a coordinating and accelerating framework that aligns delivery, derisks complex sites and focuses on interventions rooted in the unique qualities of the Clyde. Contributors highlighted the absence of any unified stewardship model for the corridor and stressed the need for a long-term governance, funding and delivery structure(s) capable of managing and maintaining assets over time.

Place Heritage and Identity contribute to Tourism, Culture and Storytelling

The Clyde's important cultural, industrial and maritime identity remain underused as a driver of regeneration and tourism. Stakeholders saw significant potential for creative, narrative-led approaches that draw on the river's layered histories, including industrial heritage, migration

stories and intangible cultural assets to strengthen the cultural economy and visitor experience. Opportunities were identified to expand the offer by strengthening cultural programming, broadening interpretation beyond traditional industrial themes, and building a more coherent identity that accentuates specific places along the Clyde.

Stakeholders recognised a growing opportunity for the Clyde to offer a stronger, more distinctive visitor destination. Potential interventions included developing long-distance walking and cycling routes, enhancing waterfront public spaces, promoting cultural programming and supporting tourism in coastal settlements. The river's heritage, landscapes and growing cultural assets were all seen as central to broadening the visitor offer (eg for different ages and sectors) and strengthening the tourism economy.

Communities, Inequality and Inclusive Growth Challenges

The socio-economic characteristics of communities along the river corridor are varied, but some areas still face significant socio-economic disparities and challenges, often legacies of the (post) industrial era. Participants highlighted the need for regeneration to contribute to a wellbeing economy by delivering clear benefits for local residents, including improved health and wellbeing, access to high-quality public spaces, and greater employment and learning opportunities.

Skills and Workforce Development

There was a strong, recurring emphasis on linking regeneration to skills development. Stakeholders stressed the importance of creating accessible pathways into work for local people, ensuring communities benefit directly from investment along the Clyde. There was a feeling that there is a growing skills shortage that needs to be addressed regionally in order to support the investment going into the Clyde. Youth engagement was highlighted, with suggestions for improved awareness of emerging sectors, more targeted interventions for young people and stronger links between schools, colleges, employers and anchor institutions. Sectors identified as particularly important included energy and sustainable/advanced manufacturing industries, maritime and defence, creative industries and climate adaptation.

Role of Connectivity, Access and Transport

Connectivity challenges are limiting the potential of certain locations along the Clyde. Infrastructure corridors, fragmented land ownership and historic industrial layouts contribute to physical and social severance, limiting access both to and along the river. While many expressed a desire for a continuous riverside route, there was also recognition that a phased and pragmatic approach may be required. Improved active travel infrastructure, better alignment with public transport networks and stronger linkages (routes and built form) between anchor destinations, river spaces and neighbouring communities were all identified as priorities.

Land Use, Development Viability and Strategic Site Opportunities

Land along the Clyde corridor is shaped by its long industrial history, creating a complex development environment that requires a strategic, coordinated approach. Stakeholders emphasised the need to differentiate clearly between sites that are essential for river-dependent industries and those more suited to mixed use or residential development. This

includes distinguishing activities that fundamentally rely on direct river access from those that simply benefit from a waterfront location.

There was strong support for safeguarding scarce deep water and quay equipped sites that cannot be replicated elsewhere, particularly for maritime, defence and energy related activity. Participants also encouraged the establishment of a hierarchy of river dependence, to ensure that uses critical to the river economy are not displaced by less suitable activities. Co-ordinated corridor-wide planning was seen as vital to retaining and growing high value sectors that rely on the Clyde's unique operational assets, while guiding more flexible uses to locations where development pressures are easier to accommodate.

Decontamination, Ground Conditions and Unlocking Development

Historic industrial activity has left a legacy of vacant/derelict land, contamination, unstable ground conditions, infilled docks and ageing quay walls across the corridor. These constraints were repeatedly identified as major barriers to regeneration, significantly affecting viability and often placing sites beyond the reach of private investment without public sector support. The level of intervention required to prepare many sites for redevelopment is substantial, illustrated by examples such as deep soil-mixing, remediation works at Shawfield and the stabilisation of historic mine workings.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of prioritising remediation strategically, supported by clearer mapping of constraints and a more consistent evidence base across the corridor. A coordinated approach to addressing ground condition challenges was viewed as essential for unlocking constrained sites, particularly those with potential to deliver transformational economic or environmental benefits. Public sector leadership in decontamination, ground stabilisation and quay wall renewal was considered critical to enabling development, attracting investment and creating the conditions for long term regeneration.



Images from: Field Study 5: Clyde Gateway

Climate Adaptation and Flood Risk

Climate adaptation and flood risk were identified as some of the most significant long-term challenges for the Clyde. Many contributors viewed flooding as the single largest risk to the success of the Clyde Mission. Concerns were raised regarding the implications of national planning policy for development within flood risk zones and the need for improved modelling and coordinated adaptation strategies. Stakeholders stressed the importance of catchment

wide approaches that combine engineered and nature-based solutions, embed resilience in all new investments and ensure fair distribution of adaptation costs and benefits across communities.

Nature, Ecology and Infrastructure Networks

There was a strong appetite for strengthening ecological connectivity, restoring habitats and embedding nature based solutions within capital projects. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of enhancing biodiversity, improving water quality and addressing issues such as invasive species and climate-related tree loss. Participants also highlighted the need for long-term stewardship models that can secure ongoing maintenance of new green and blue infrastructure.

Energy, Heat and Low Carbon Infrastructure

The Clyde corridor presents significant opportunities for low carbon energy generation. Participants discussed the potential for expanding district heating systems using river water, wastewater and mine water as renewable heat sources, building on successful examples such as Queens Quay. The need to identify anchor heat loads, coordinate cross boundary planning and link energy infrastructure with fuel poverty reduction were all emphasised as part of just transition outcomes.

Spatial Diversity Along the Corridor

The various study visits reinforced that the Clyde is not a single condition but a series of highly distinct environments, ranging from rural headwaters to urban centres and coastal settlements. Each area faces different economic, environmental and social pressures. Stakeholders stressed that the masterplan must be strategic but also sensitive to local identity and context, offering the opportunity to realise greater local identity over time.







Images from: Field Study 2: Estuary/Firth of Clyde (top left);Field Study 4: Clyde Valley (top right), Field Study 3: Urban Lower Clyde (bottom)

For more information please visit:

[Clyde Mission - Glasgow City Region]