

**The West of Scotland Chapter's series of events** continued on the 28 February (2008) with a discussion on the collaboration initiative between our two largest cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**Veronica Noone of the Glasgow Edinburgh Collaboration Initiative** commenced the evening with an introduction to the work of the Initiative. The Scottish Government's 'Cities Review' (2003) suggested that considerable benefit could be gained for Scotland as a whole through city collaboration. The collaboration initiative is a partnership between the two City Councils and Scottish Enterprise. The initiative is supported by the Government's Cities Growth Fund, and the Government are also represented on the Initiative's Steering Group.

*Mutual strengths of the two cities ...*

Veronica outlined the strength of the two cities and their contribution to the country's economy, including:

- Since 1995, almost half (over 100,000) Scotland's new jobs created in Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- In the last 10 years, Glasgow and Edinburgh have seen 60,000 more residents into employment. From only 20% of the Scottish population, that's 40% of the increase.
- Glasgow and Edinburgh employed 42% of those 2003-2004 graduates who found work in Scotland.
- The two cities generate more than 250,000 jobs for non city residents.

*The Collaboration Initiative* is not a project delivery organisation but one which seeks to identify and exploit opportunities where collaboration between the cities can create synergy. It aims to do this by:

- Influencing others to deliver collaboration objectives
- Identifying and exploiting new opportunities and propositions for collaboration
- Providing broad and effective support for the collaboration proposition
- Engendering a culture of collaboration between the cities more widely
- Raising UK and international profile of the two cities as an attractive location

With an initial focus on tourism as a key sector, the Initiative is underpinned by identifying an evidence base for collaboration to avoid what could be described as collaboration for collaborations sake.

One of the topics of most interest to urban planners is physical connectivity and, in particular, the transport links between Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Initiative is actively working with both Transport Scotland and Scotrail on issues such as journey times and communications coverage.

**Professor Ivan Turok of the University of Glasgow's Urban Studies Department** provided a critical review of the benefits of collaboration and whether there was a compelling case for the cities to collaborate. He suggested that there were opportunities associated with a single integrated labour market in that Edinburgh is experiencing labour shortages, high house

prices and a broadly more restrictive planning regime whilst Glasgow has surplus labour, lower house prices and a generally more receptive planning regime.

Professor Turok noted that travel to work patterns demonstrated 'distance decay' with relatively few people travelling between the two cities for employment. He also cautioned the prospect of concentrating on one approach to the detriment of others.

***The Collaboration Initiative Business Case concludes*** that:

"Collaboration is about making best use of our best assets. It is only one 'tool in the box' but recognises the changing role of cities and the importance of scale in international competitiveness."

This perhaps reflects the ensuing debate quite well in that the audience showed a great deal of support for increasing the profile of our cities and recognising the contribution they make to the nation's economy, whilst acknowledging the benefits of seeking an evidence base for where to collaborate.

There is a compelling evidence base demonstrating the importance of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the nation's economy. The increasing recognition of this, together with moves such as establishing the Collaboration Initiative, should be welcomed and promoted by planners to capitalise on the inherent potential of our cities.

*For further reading see: [www.glasgow-edinburgh.co.uk](http://www.glasgow-edinburgh.co.uk)*