

## Agreed Position November 2025

Cities and regions that successfully harness AI's transformative potential will be those that develop comprehensive ecosystems, involving digital and data infrastructure, targeted skills development, support for AI adoption, and strategic policy frameworks that both mitigate risks and maximise opportunities for all. We believe that Edinburgh needs a blueprint to lead a coordinated effort, and to ensure that we create a supportive ecosystem with the right infrastructure. This will enable innovators through investment, research expertise, governance, and scale-up support. It will also enable our businesses – especially SMEs and the third sector – to confidently adopt AI through skills support, knowledge-sharing, cyber security support, and AI champions. This blueprint also needs to consider collective measures to manage the risks of AI – including IP protection; forecasting and mitigating any potential AI-related job losses; and reducing digital exclusion. By creating a strong plan and proposition for Edinburgh's AI ecosystem, we can tap into funding and investment from both public and private sector. We can ensure the right infrastructure (particularly data centres, energy infrastructure, and innovation clusters) is in place. And we can ensure that Edinburgh's businesses are able to gain a competitive advantage through advanced AI adoption.

## Context

Artificial Intelligence has the potential to create up to 1.5% annual productivity gains across the UK economy, whilst some estimates say generative AI specifically could nearly double economic growth over the next 15 years. Edinburgh has distinctive strengths that position the city as a potential leader in this transformation: a sixty-year heritage of pioneering AI research, over 400 active researchers and PhD students in artificial intelligence, world-class innovation infrastructure including the Bayes Centre, data centre and renewables capacity, and a technology sector that attracted the third-highest number of funding rounds in the UK in 2024.

## Rationale

- Edinburgh has huge pre-existing strengths in innovation that we can capitalise on.
- Many businesses often don't know where to start with AI adoption. AI is also often seen as a cost-cutting tool rather than a growth lever. A lot of progress could be made through adoption support, and sharing case studies and best practice.
- Leadership and strategic direction is needed to ensure we aren't left behind and can tap into funding and other support.

## Data: Evidence Gathered

[Edinburgh Chamber roundtable, September 2025](#)

- Different stakeholders each have a role to play in creating an AI ecosystem and contributing towards a blueprint. E.g. the energy companies and regulators need to ensure the energy infrastructure is sufficient to power the data centres and supercomputers that AI relies upon. Influential businesses and charities need to lead the way in their sectors, sharing examples of their AI adoption. Our HE and FE institutions have a role in attracting and developing the right talent and skills, driving innovation, and supporting spin-out companies to develop new technologies.

## Key Policy Maker and Stakeholder Position

UK Govt. – have published an AI Opportunities Action Plan, and a policy of establishing AI Growth Zones across the UK.

Scot Govt. – launched an AI strategy in 2021. Have partnered with the Data Lab to create an AI Alliance to deliver on Scotland's vision to be a leader in trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI

CEC – aims to use AI to drive efficiencies but are still developing an AI policy. Did not bid for the city to be an AI Growth Zone

## Data: Evidence Required

- Up-to-date data on e.g. commuter patterns, employers affected – CEC
- Assessment of impact in Edinburgh and potential effectiveness in achieving aims – CEC
- More detail on how the scheme would be implemented – CEC

## Chamber Asks

- Chamber to establish an AI knowledge-sharing group
- A blueprint needs to be developed, and asks of different policymakers and stakeholders will be developed as part of this, in order to build the AI ecosystem we need.
- Set up an expert panel to keep the Chamber informed on important updates, such as developments in regulation or opportunities for Edinburgh in relation to AI