

Commonwealth
Sustainable Cities Coalition

Uniting Commonwealth systems for sustainable urban growth



Why this matters

This case matters because many fast-growing cities need systems capacity before individual projects can succeed. It shows how a coalition can align institutions around the foundations of sustainable urban growth.

The urban pressure

The pressure is structural and widespread. Urban populations in many Commonwealth countries are growing rapidly, particularly in low-income and climate-vulnerable contexts. Without better systems, cities risk locking in inadequate housing, weak infrastructure, informality and climate exposure for decades.



The partnership response

The coalition operated through complementary institutional roles. Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP), Commonwealth Engineers' Council (CEC), Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and The King's Foundation brought professional, academic, local government and built environment networks; The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) provided pilot funding; member states and action groups brought policy and delivery perspectives.

What the project did

The CSCC piloted an integrated approach to sustainable urbanisation. It established action groups, diagnosed barriers, convened stakeholders and sought to operationalise the Commonwealth Declaration on Sustainable Urbanisation adopted at CHOGM 2024.

Interventions and outcomes

- Established working groups across planning, finance, housing and skills.
- Convened Commonwealth governments, professional networks and civil society around shared urbanisation challenges.
- Produced diagnostics, case studies and recommendations to support longer-term reform.

What made it work

The coalition model bridged sectors that seldom work together. Alignment with the Commonwealth Declaration gave the work political legitimacy and momentum, while professional networks created practical reach.

Challenges and lessons

As a pilot, the project did not yet deliver direct jobs, emissions reductions or service outcomes. Its value is in laying the institutional foundations for longer-term systemic reform.

Relevance to other cities

Relevant to countries and city networks facing rapid urbanisation, fragmented mandates and weak capacity across planning, finance, housing and skills.

Follow-up opportunity

This case could support further exchange on Commonwealth urban cooperation, integrated planning systems, urban finance, housing reform and professional capacity-building.

For more information visit: commonwealthsustainablecities.org



Partnerships to deliver prosperous urban futures

Part of the UK's contribution to the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum, this case study highlights how cities are responding to challenges through practical, place-based collaboration. It reflects a shared commitment to learning, collaboration and building partnerships for the future of cities.