

**CONVENTION O THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS – MONDAY 28 OCTOBER 2019 (PAPER 1)**

**OUTCOMES FROM THE CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS – 4 MARCH 2019 – ORKNEY**

<b>Transport</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p>Welcome the collaborative approach to NTS and STPR and welcome the continuation of that approach with a number of comments for Transport Scotland to take forward through the national/regional/local collaboration.</p> <p>COHI noted that NTS and STPR set the future strategy and infrastructure interventions but this sits alongside ongoing work to address immediate issues.</p> <p>With the draft NTS due for consultation later this year there is an opportunity to engage now through the COHI secretariat and COHI lead officers group to inform the draft. Transport Scotland to undertake sectoral engagement (including food and drink, aquaculture, forestry, tourism) to inform draft National Transport Strategy and identification of infrastructure interventions through the STPR.</p> <p>CoHI welcomed the equality promoting focus of the draft outcomes and recognised the need to reflect the rurality and remoteness issues for accessing services, including health services on the mainland to ensure accessibility for all irrespective of disability, income inequalities etc.</p>	<p>Heather Cowan/ Alison Irvine</p>	<p>Transport Scotland has taken forward the COHI outcomes recorded for the spring 2019 COHI meeting in Orkney.</p> <p>A further National Transport Strategy paper and presentation was made to COHI SOG) on 11 June 2019 in advance of the launch of the consultation on the draft National Transport Strategy on 31 July 2019.</p> <p>Transport Scotland commissioned business sector engagement on the National Transport Strategy (Tourism, Services, Food and Drink, Energy, Manufacturing and Digital) which took place in June 2019</p> <p>The draft Strategy for consultation reflects the issues discussed at the spring 2019 COHI including referencing the Convention of Highlands &amp; Islands support an ambition for an affordable day return to a city in response to the challenge faced by some island communities being unable to travel to and from Scotland’s cities in the same day.</p>

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<p>Transport Scotland to ensure that the strategy reflects issues that affect young peoples' access to services and education and the importance of retaining young people to tackle demographic challenges and depopulation.</p> <p>COHI supported an ambition for affordable day returns to cities should reflect a business day of 0900 to 1700 and not 0900 to 1500.</p>		
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<b>Maximising the Marine Economy of the Highlands and Islands</b>	<b>SG Lead</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p>MAXiMAR work needs to continue/maintain leadership in this area, building on the unified acceptance of COHI members of the importance of the marine economy</p> <p>Need to ensure that there is a proper focus across all three sectors by increasing the intensity of effort in marine biotechnology and aquaculture</p> <p>The MAXiMAR focus, and HIE's effort, needs to strengthen the fundamental importance of the grid connection as underpinning infrastructure and recognise wider challenges in the region around, for example, migration and housing.</p> <p>HIE to work closely with local authorities and other partners to support the development of</p>	<p>Ian Davies</p>	<p>The MAXiMAR Consortium continues to meet – 13th Meeting taking took place on 13th September. HIE has reflected the importance of the marine economy in its new Strategy. Still to identify additional resource to help accelerate this work. A project team is currently working on a re-submission of the Strength in Places Fund application bid, due early October. The bid which is focused on the enhancing growth of the marine economy aims to deliver on the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing the value of the natural assets that are realised within the region</li> <li>2. Reducing the capital cost and risk of operating in the marine environments</li> <li>3. Increasing space for marine developments</li> </ol> <p>Aquaculture remains a high priority, and the marine biotech/algae sector is growing with a number of new companies and company buy outs.</p>

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<p>regional growth deals through the MAXiMAR findings and to encourage a wider culture of innovation.</p>		<p>Hebridean Seaweed completing a £7.5m investment in new plant and equipment. New, young innovative companies like Cuantec choosing to establish themselves in the region.</p> <p>COHI remains focussed on energy, fuel poverty and the linkages with housing. A skills assessment of the three marine sectors has highlighted that, combined, they will need an additional 150-200 new entrants each year over the next 10 years.</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with local authorities through development of regional deals. Argyll &amp; Isles Growth Deal has a strong emphasis on marine innovations, with early indicators of approximately £30m funding for activities in Macrihanish and Dunstaffnage. The Islands Deal discussions are also advancing and marine is a central focus. A workshop is being planned through North Ayrshire Council relating to their developing deal around marine.</p>
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<b>Brexit Impacts and Strategic Priorities for the H &amp; I including the Shared Prosperity Fund from 2021</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p>COHI members restated that EU funding is fundamental to life in the Highlands and Islands. It underpins measures to address poverty, education and rural development across the region as well as being vital to supporting crofting and hill farmers. The anticipated adverse economic and population impacts of Brexit in the Highlands and Islands must be addressed through a strong, single voice on the design and reach</p>	<p>Hilary Pearce /Kenneth Robertson</p>	<p>Since the previous COHI meeting in March 2019 and in the absence of any update from the UKG on the Shared Prosperity Fund the Scottish Government has taken action.</p> <p>On the 26 June 2019, Ivan McKee, Minister for Trade Investment and Innovation announced at the Finance and Constitution Committee his intention to establish a Future Funding Steering Group to inform Scotlands approach to any replacement for EU Structural Programmes.</p>

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<p>of the Shared Prosperity Fund. COHI members agreed that the Shared Prosperity Fund must maintain the momentum of existing funding, be predicated on local decision making and complementarity with local policies and initiatives. The broad character for the fund should recognise rural fragility and address depopulation.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will work with COHI partners to map the range, value and impacts of existing EU funding and use that to foster opportunities to collectively shape the character and quantum of the Fund.</p>		<p>Professor David Bell is Chairperson of the group include representatives of COHI along with members representing lead partners, delivery agents, beneficiaries/end users, academia and Scottish Government.</p> <p>COHI's contribution to this work is vital to ensure that any anticipated adverse impacts due to the loss of Structural Funds in the Highlands and Islands are understood.</p> <p>The group will oversee the Scottish consultation on the replacement of the programmes and draw from existing evidence and analysis to inform their recommendations to Scottish Ministers.</p> <p>The first meeting of the group was held on the 16 September and work is expected to be concluded by Spring 2020.</p> <p>SG officials continue to work with other devolved administrations, Whitehall departments and the EC on possible arrangements for remainder of the current programme under a range of different post-EU exit scenarios.</p>
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