

**CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND (CoSS)  
28 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**OUTCOMES – DUMFRIES – 3 FEBRUARY 2020**

**(Paper 1)**

<b>Outcome 1 – Vision and ambition for CoSS</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p>The Convention endorsed the ambition and vision for the Convention of the South of Scotland – with a particular emphasis on driving inclusive growth through engaging with, and listening to, local communities and local businesses.</p> <p>Convention members agreed the importance of shared ownership of the Convention agenda and action. The purpose of the Convention should be to address interconnected, and ‘wicked’ problems – and to work together to resolve them. The work of SOSEP has demonstrated to us that partnership and hearing from a wide range of voices is important to maximise the region’s economic potential. We must ensure that the voices of communities and the private sector are heard and heeded in the work that COSS takes forward.</p> <p>The critical areas that members agreed for consideration at the next Convention are:</p> <p>Ensuring the skills and education opportunities align with the current and future economic needs of the region and are delivered in flexible ways that maximise local people’s ability to access training that enhances their economic prospects. A paper will follow which will include a review of mechanisms and approaches to achieve this.</p>	<p>The development of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP), which will have a key role in aligning efforts and resources around common strategic goals, is progressing well. It will include the private sector, community development, social enterprise, Third Sector, Registered Social Landlords, the College and University sectors, as well as members from national agencies. The Scottish Government will also be represented on the REP in an observer capacity to help guide and its approach and connect with national programmes. The first full meeting of the REP took place on 18<sup>th</sup> September.</p> <p>Plans to present papers on Net Zero and Skills to this meeting of the Convention have been altered to reflect the emerging priorities and challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to focus on economic recovery, within which Net Zero is an important theme. As a result, the papers to be presented will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• COVID 19 – Regional Economic Impacts And Supporting Recovery; and</li><li>• Workforce and Skills - Responding To The Emerging Labour Market Crisis</li></ul>

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<p>The opportunity around the national Net Zero ambition is huge for the region, and the work on this must intensify. We will identify the opportunities and challenges for the region in contributing to the Net Zero by 2045 target. A paper will follow to the next Convention.</p> <p>Work has already started to establish a Senior Officers' Group with representation from all members of the Convention. The Senior Officers' Group alongside Government officials will be commissioned to take forward work before the next meeting to progress these areas and report back in September</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 2 – Transport and Regional Collaboration</b></p>	<p><b>Update</b></p>
<p>The Convention recognised and endorsed the strong collaborative and joined up working to date, and agreed the importance of this going forward.</p> <p>The Convention recognised the need for alignment across digital and physical connectivity including alignment between transport, digital and energy.</p> <p>Acknowledging the Climate Change targets whilst also recognising rurality in transport decisions and in the context of the application of the hierarchies is important; members noted that there would continue to</p>	<p>Specifically on the opportunities for innovation within SOS Transport Scotland has supported both Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders councils with feasibility studies through our Switched on Towns &amp; Cities Programme. These are intended to support Local Authorities in developing applications for the Programme's capital fund which aims address perceived barriers to decarbonisation of transport and to facilitate a step change in the uptake of zero emission vehicles across Scotland's towns and cities. There are clear opportunities for innovation and support for new technology as part of this capital fund. We anticipate seeking expressions of interest from Local Authorities later in 2020 and hope to open for applications in early 2021.</p>

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<p>be the practical reality of reliance on vehicle movements within a rural setting.</p> <p>There are opportunities for innovation in the South of Scotland, and using demonstrator projects for both the development and application of new technology within transport to promote the economic opportunity for the SOS from the green agenda.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 3 – Demographics and Skills in the South of Scotland</b></p>	<p><b>Update</b></p>
<p>The Convention reconfirmed the central importance of skills and education to the future of the region, particularly noting the crucial importance of growing the working age population.</p> <p>The three key elements included: developing economic opportunities, alignment with employers and local economic demand, and availability of supporting infrastructure such as housing. There is a need to ensure planning rules are appropriate to the rural context and consider whether there is sufficient incentives to support conversion or repurposing of properties.</p> <p>In order to consider these interrelated elements, the Convention commissioned the Senior Officers' Group to undertake work on repopulation (to support work described in Outcome 1 on education and skills) which</p>	<p>SDS, SFC and SOSEP tabled a paper for COSS on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020, which considered the demographic and skills landscape in the South of Scotland, setting out the national policy context for population, talent attraction and skills, and providing a regional view of the area, including demographic and skills challenges. At this meeting COSS agreed and endorsed the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Convention reconfirmed the central importance of skills and education to the future of the region, particularly noting the crucial importance of growing the working age population.</li> <li>• The three key elements included: developing economic opportunities, alignment with employers and local economic demand, and availability of supporting infrastructure such as housing. There is a need to ensure planning rules are appropriate to the rural context and consider whether there are sufficient incentives to support conversion or repurposing of properties.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing economic opportunities will be progressed by SOSE, the Regional Economic Partnership (REP) and Team South of Scotland</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<p>would form an agenda item at the next Convention meeting. This should include how the community wealth building approach can be utilised within the region.</p> <p>The Convention particularly noted the importance of an educational offer within the region that both retained and attracted working age population. SDS, SFC, local authorities, FE and HE have a particular role in developing a refreshed offer for the next meeting.</p> <p>This work should build on and support current activity, such as the Ministerial Task Force on Population, and SDS and SFC's work on skills alignment. It should also look to maximise the potential of greatly enhanced digital connectivity and existing physical assets.</p>	<p>Partners. It will also be considered in the upcoming Regional Economic Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ SOSE is focused on ensuring it supports economic opportunities across the region, prioritising investment in this financial year to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Support businesses to adapt and diversify, including providing loans;</li><li>▪ Support organisations in crisis to support organisations retain and sustain jobs</li><li>▪ Test ideas from communities wanting to create inclusive growth</li><li>▪ Help communities acquire assets that deliver inclusive growth</li><li>▪ The proposed REP programme board demonstrates that we are creating the structures for this alignment.</li></ul></li><li>○ SDS has produced COVID labour market insights for the South of Scotland, which consider economic opportunity areas. An updated Regional Skills Assessment will also be available in October 2020. The 'Workforce and Skills- responding to the emerging labour market crisis' paper highlights work to identify employment opportunity areas.</li><li>○ Spatial strategies: An Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS) for the South of Scotland has been prepared jointly by Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council. The proposed IRSS identifies several strategic developments across the South of Scotland. The developments comprise a mixture of place-based projects such as the green energy park at Chapelcross and themed developments such as the Borderlands digital infrastructure programme. Most of the developments are projects and</li></ul>
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	<p>programmes identified through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Housing: The national affordable housing supply programme for 2019-20 shows that over £18.657 million was invested by the Scottish Government in Dumfries and Galloway and £19.375 in Scottish Borders, to support the delivery of new affordable housing. Taking account of development partners own financial resources the actual amounts levered into the region are substantially higher. In Dumfries and Galloway this enabled approval of 355 affordable housing units, site starts for 162 new homes and the completion of 240 properties. In the Scottish Borders, this enabled approval of 342 affordable housing units, site starts for 157 new homes and the completion of 105 properties.</li><li>● In order to consider these interrelated elements, the Convention commissioned the Senior Officers' Group to undertake work on repopulation (to support work described in Outcome 1 on education and skills) which would form an agenda item at the next Convention meeting. This should include how the community wealth building approach can be utilised within the region.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ A research project has been completed which considered how best to retain college and university leavers in the South of Scotland and attract talent into the region.</li><li>○ Community Wealth Building is considered as a separate COSS paper</li></ul></li><li>● The Convention particularly noted the importance of an educational offer within the region that both retained and attracted working age population. SDS, SFC, local authorities, FE and HE have a particular role in developing a refreshed offer for the next meeting.</li></ul>
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- The ‘Workforce and Skills - Responding to the emerging labour market crisis’ paper highlights work with SDS, FE/HE sector and the SFC to develop a new education and skills provision plan for the South of Scotland
- This work will consider how education, skills and training is delivered, and the re-shaped ‘offer’ can attract and retain people of working age.
- The South of Scotland colleges are also keen to expand the tertiary education offer in the South of Scotland, building on the existing Learning and Skills hub and spoke network.
- This work should build on and support current activity, such as the Ministerial Task Force on Population, and SDS and SFC’s work on skills alignment. It should also look to maximise the potential of greatly enhanced digital connectivity and existing physical assets.
  - South of Scotland partners recognise the importance of this area and will continue to work in an aligned way to address this. In addition, partners are developing the skills to maximise the investment in the R100 programme
  - SDS has commissioned a skills alignment research project which will facilitate a process of greater education and skills provision across the region, which is driven by the needs of employers, as well as raising regional attractiveness to prospective new employers. Findings will be available by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

The remainder of ‘Workforce and Skills - responding to the emerging labour market crisis’ paper sets out actions and steps needed to support the COSS outcomes, while considering the unique set of challenges which COVID-19 brings. These

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	<p>include how to grow the working age population when fewer employment opportunities exist; developing a regional education and supporting infrastructure offer to support this; and linking education and skills provision to job opportunity.</p>
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The Regional Economic Partnership has endorsed the creation of a South of Scotland Education and Skills Programme Board. This Programme Board will be the key strategic forum for developing an effective labour market response in partnership across the region; facilitating greater collaboration and partnership working; and maximising efficient usage of resources. It will provide a focus for addressing the outcome areas noted above.