

**CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS
MONDAY 26 October 2020**

(Paper 2)

OUTCOMES FROM PREVIOUS CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS MEETINGS

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

Transport	Policy Lead	Updated October 2020 - Completed
<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. CoHI noted that NTS and STPR set the future strategy and infrastructure interventions but this sits alongside ongoing work to address immediate issues. 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. 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. 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>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 CoHI 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> <p>The consultation on the draft Strategy was hosted on the Scottish Government's Citizen Space site and ran between 31 July and 23 October 2019. The consultation asked 19 questions on the Strategy. A total of 1,221 responses were received, comprised of 201 responses from organisations, 382 from individuals, and 638 campaign responses generated from an online campaign by Cycling UK. This includes 26 local authority responses and responses from all 7 Regional Transport Partnerships as well as responses from the three main business representative groups.</p> <p>The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 made it a statutory requirement for Scottish Ministers to prepare a National Transport Strategy. The Act sets out requirements regarding the preparation, consultation, publication, review and reporting of the Strategy.</p>

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<p>CoHI supported an ambition for affordable day returns to cities should reflect a business day of 09:00 to 17:00 and not 09:00 to 15:00.</p>		<p>The draft Strategy was updated to take account of the analysis of the consultation responses and the statutory requirements of the Transport Act. Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity made a Statement in Parliament on Wednesday 5 February to coincide with publication of the final National Transport Strategy. https://www.transport.gov.scot/NTS2.</p> <p>The final version retains the text reflecting the challenge for some remote and island communities face with residents currently being unable to travel to and from Scotland's cities in the same day while undertaking a day's work and Convention of Highlands & Islands support for an ambition for an affordable day return to a city.</p> <p>The Cabinet Secretary has confirmed that SG will publish the first NTS Delivery plan by the end of 2020 and that this will take account of the impact of Covid-19.</p>
<p>Maximising the Marine Economy of the Highlands and Islands</p>	<p>Policy Lead</p>	<p>Updated October 2020</p>
<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. Need to ensure that there is a proper focus across all three sectors by increasing the intensity of effort in marine biotechnology and aquaculture. 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>Ian Davies/ Morven Cameron HIE</p>	<p>Due to COVID there has been limited progress on the Blue Economy/MAXiMAR actions, with HIE staff and Local Authorities, in particular, tied up with urgent response work.</p> <p>The second submission to the UKRI Strength in Places Fund was unsuccessful. £29m was applied for to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund a cluster resource to help build a strong collaboration of key regional assets to support marine innovation and new technology • Fund academic/scientific capacity and capability across the three universities operating in the region – UHI, UoSirling and Heriot Watt University

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<p>HIE to work closely with local authorities and other partners to support the development of regional growth deals through the MAXIMAR findings and to encourage a wider culture of innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund key infrastructure that supports marine technological advances, aligning with regional growth deals and other such planned investments <p>Feedback has been more positive than previously and the consensus is that we will prepare for a 3rd submission for when Wave 3 is launched. UHI will take the lead on this, supported by key agencies and industries.</p> <p>HIE has recently confirmed the raising of the priority of the Blue Economy (amounting to 14% of the region's economy) as a core part of the region's Green Recovery and will be structuring itself accordingly to support a cohesive vision for its marine sectors. Once resourced, this will enable wider partnership working with Local Authorities and Crown Estate Scotland amongst others.</p> <p>HIE's Energy team continues to influence the development of the grid infrastructure.</p> <p>The region's focus on population and talent attraction is recognising the link between our marine sectors operating in our remote and rural west coast and island communities and the need for housing, education provision and other supporting infrastructure. This is captured in the Demographics paper being presented at COHI this month.</p> <p>Regional growth deals for the Islands and Argyll contain strong and innovative marine projects which, if successful, will significantly impact on the success of the region's marine economy.</p> <p>Confirmation of the development of a national Blue Economy Action Plan was included in the Government's Programme for Government launched on 1st September 2020. HIE, Scottish Enterprise and Crown Estate Scotland have been working with the team in Marine Scotland to support this outcome.</p> <p>Marine Scotland's incoming Director has stated the following: "The Blue Economy Action Plan will be at the centre of our work to help marine sectors recover from coronavirus and grow while preparing for EU</p>
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		<p>Exit, and it will underpin our path towards net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases. It will consider the range of marine activities in our seas and look at unlocking opportunities in areas like skills, science, innovation, infrastructure and regulation by taking a more joined-up strategic approach and making connections and partnerships to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.</p> <p>“The Blue Economy model recognises the abundant natural capital in our seas and rivers and the opportunities they can offer to support the sustainable growth of our economy while promoting Scotland as a world leader in maritime innovation.</p> <p>“At the heart of this work will be a collaborative approach across government, the wider public sector, coastal communities, our science community, marine industries and the marine environmental sector. “</p> <p>HIE and other stakeholders will be engaging with Marine Scotland to inform this new Action Plan.</p>
<p>Brexit Impacts and Strategic Priorities for the H & I including the Shared Prosperity Fund from 2021</p>	<p>Policy Lead</p>	<p>Updated October 2020 - Paper for consideration at CoHI October 2020 Meeting</p>
<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 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.</p>	<p>Fiona Loynd/Sean Davidson</p>	<p>Despite being less than 3 months away from the end of EU Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes in the UK, the UK Government has provided no substantive update on the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which is set to replace them. Details are to be made public at the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in November 2020.</p> <p>Scottish officials therefore have begun policy development under the assumption that Scotland’s share of the UKSPF will be fully available to the Scottish Government and partners to utilise at our own discretion.</p> <p>Over the winter of 2019/20 the Scottish Government commissioned a consultation into the replacement of the ESIF Programmes post EU exit. This enabled some 171 unique organisations to put forward their views. The</p>

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<p>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>consultation was supported by eight workshops held around the country including ones in Kirkwall, Stornoway and Inverness. Attendance at these specific workshops accounted for 30% of all attendance. Key themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• that Scotland has control over any replacement fund;• that policy development is aligned to Scottish Priorities;• that the new funding is additional;• operating over a multi-year period (similarly to the current ESIF funds) <p>planning and delivery is devolved to the lowest possible level with simplified administration.</p> <p>A Steering Group was set up to guide the consultative process. Members were selected from across Scotland, reflecting both geographical and sectoral representation. Rob Clarke from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Cllr Dr Steven Heddle from Orkney Islands Council are members. A selection of four thematic groups were assembled to undertake in-depth work into 4 key areas and develop recommendations related to each for wider consideration including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Alignment: Looked at the fit between the UKSPF and other funding streams, other EU Programmes including cross-border support as well as considering post COVID recovery plans. The group also considered how the UKSPF might address lateral themes such as climate change and wellbeing.• Governance and Delivery: Considered which mechanisms might be used to distribute funding and to recommend a preferred model. It addressed issues of subsidiarity, additionality and governance.• Funding and Allocation Models: Considered options for how funding should be apportioned across the country. Recommendation have focused on the definition of geographies, the definition of place and methodologies to for determining funding splits.• Monitoring and Evaluation: Developed key success criteria and a logic model for determining the impact of the funds.
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		<p>The recommendations of both Steering Group and Thematic Groups are currently being considered by Scottish Ministers and will be published in full in the upcoming weeks. The Scottish Government will continue to stress to the UK Government of the need for full engagement in the development of the UKSPF to ensure Scotland's share of funding is targeted to meet the varied needs of Scotland's people, communities and businesses; conveyed by these findings.</p>
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OUTCOMES FROM THE CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS – 22 OCTOBER 2018 – ELGIN

Daylight Savings	Policy Lead	Updated October 2020
<p>COHI members raised considerable concerns about the European Commission's proposed Directive to end seasonal clock changes in the EU in 2019. The Scottish Government will ensure these are reflected in ongoing discussions with the UK Government.</p>	<p>Joe Brown</p>	<p>COHI's agreed position was conveyed to UK Government by the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy on 23rd October 2018. In November 2018 the UK Parliament issued a Reasoned Opinion that the proposal is inconsistent with the principle of subsidiarity (which is that the EU should only act where there is clear added value and similar benefits cannot be achieved by Member States acting at a national, regional or local level). A number of other member states have also returned similar opinions. The Commission, Council, and Parliament are considering that response, which effectively means that it remains unclear whether, how and when the proposed Directive will be progressed.</p> <p>In February 2020, the House of Lords EU Internal Market Sub-Committee completed an inquiry into the implications for the UK of the European Commission's proposal that would discontinue seasonal changes of time in the EU. The Scottish Government had submitted evidence in August set firmly in the context of the Scottish Government's established position that there is no substantive economic or social case for any change to existing arrangements, or for different time-zones within the UK. The Committee recommended that the UK Government considers the options for a possible future impact assessment and consultation with stakeholders, through preparatory work:</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the research landscape, including any research carried out where non-alignment on clock changes exists, either within or between countries, and develop an evidence-based approach to the broader question of whether the UK should retain seasonal changes of time; and To carry out further work to identify the possible implications of a change to our time arrangements for business, nationally and internationally, working with the devolved authorities to better map and understand distinct regional issues.
Skills	Policy Lead	Update October 2020
Building on an example of Western Isles Council and Skills Development Scotland, we will work across partners over the next year to identify and plan a programme of responses to the sub-regional population and skills challenges of the Highlands and Islands.	Oonagh Gil	<p>Highlands & Islands Skills Investment Plan (HISIP) action plan (2019-2023) published October 2019. The refreshed HISIP, combined with charter developments has led to an increase in local skills planning activity across the region. All Local Authorities now have CPP sub groups driving local employability and skills planning and on the Islands these plans will play a role in charter delivery.</p> <p>The focus of the HISIP programme board is to establish a monitoring plan that will measure progress against key outcomes – not simply activities. High level outcomes are currently being benchmarked and will in the long term be the measure of success (Migration, jobs created, alignment of provision, destinations etc.) and this is being led by SDS. An interim report is being developed to provide a brief snapshot of the operating data and results that are emerging. In addition, the report will highlight what is working, what still needs to change and priorities for the next phase. Progress has been impacted by the pandemic.</p>
Talent Attraction	Policy Lead	Updated October 2020
A commitment to a compelling, inclusive, all embracing campaign to attract people to each area of		<input type="checkbox"/> A Ministerial Task Force and a Programme Board have been set up. Talent Attraction is a key part of their remits.

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<p>the region and each economic growth area along the model of Scotland is Now, including a commitment by public bodies to work together to have shared recruitment campaigns.</p>	<p>Carron Flockhart</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have a Programme for Government Commitment to develop a distinct Scottish approach to address skills gaps and take action to support a skilled working population <input type="checkbox"/> We have established a 'Talent Attraction Network' to maximise the impact of current and planned recruitment activity. Membership includes Scottish Government policy leads with responsibility for workforce planning, enterprise agencies, Brand Scotland, Talent Scotland and SDS.
<p>Digital</p>	<p>Policy Lead</p>	<p>Updated October 2020</p>
<p>COHI members are still looking for information on just how far R100 will go; looking for ability to implement interim solutions and potentially invest their own resources to do so – SG will provide information once contracts have been awarded, and are happy to discuss Aligned Interventions/alternative technology solutions with local authorities.</p>	<p>Robbie McGhee / Andy Manson</p>	<p>On 21 November 2019, the Minister for Connectivity confirmed that BT plc had been selected as the preferred bidder for the north lot of the R100 procurement. In a subsequent Parliamentary Statement on 9 January 2020, the Minister announced that this decision has subsequently been challenged by Gigaclear Limited, putting contract signature on hold until legal proceedings have concluded.</p> <p>However, agreement has now been reached on this matter, and we will now focus on finalising the contract, aiming for contract signature by the end of the year, enabling us to progress the delivery of superfast broadband in some of Scotland's most remote and rural areas as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Of course, in the meantime, we remain committed to providing support to ensure that everyone can access superfast broadband services by the end of 2021 - delivered through the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme, which we launched in September 2020.</p> <p>Anyone whose home or business broadband speed is less than 30 Megabits per second (Mbps), and where there are no plans to bring superfast broadband to their address by the end of 2021 (whether through the BT contract or by commercial means), will be eligible for a voucher.</p>

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<p>SG to work more closely with Ofcom to create a more effective regulatory framework.</p> <p>Focus further COHI discussions on digital on the issues of benefits realisation, once infrastructure is in place</p>	<p>Members of the R100 team have continued to engage with all 7 Local Authorities in the HIE area.</p> <p>Scottish Ministers and SG officials have engaged in regular discussions with Ofcom on regulatory issues relevant to Scotland. The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands also recently provided a written response to Ofcom’s consultation on the Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review 2021-2026, highlighting ways in which Ofcom could ensure that the regulatory framework caters more directly to Scotland’s unique geographical challenges. In January 2020, the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland recommended that the Scottish and UK Governments should immediately commit to work together to develop by 2021, an appropriately devolved regulatory and pricing framework that enables energy and telecoms infrastructure investment to be planned and delivered to meet the future needs of Scotland, and we are considering how best to deliver on that recommendation.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is committed to increasing digital participation and ensuring that all of Scotland is able to enjoy the social, cultural and economic benefits of the internet.</p> <p>Our commitment to increasing digital participation – and ensuring that everyone in Scotland is able to enjoy the social, cultural and economic benefits of internet access – is demonstrated through the Connecting Scotland programme.</p> <p>The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of access to the internet at home and the first phase of the programme has provided data, devices, digital skills training and technical support to low income, digitally excluded people who are clinically at risk from coronavirus.</p> <p>The second phase of programme will provide devices, unlimited data and support to more than 20,000 low income families with children and young care leavers and Phase 3, which was announced in our Programme for Government,</p>
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		will extend this even further. By the end of 2021, Connecting Scotland will have supported an additional 50,000 low income households across Scotland.
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OUTCOMES FROM THE CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS – 12 MARCH 2018 – MILLPORT

Air traffic control	Policy Lead	Updated October 2020
CoHI members welcomed the HIAL presentation and highlighted the importance of responding to real or perceived concerns about the centralisation, safety and resilience of the ATC modernisation proposal scheduled for implementation in 2028. HIAL provided reassurance that a new system could only be introduced with the agreement of the CAA who would require certain levels of resilience to be built in. HIAL would continue to keep local authorities informed as the modernisation programme progresses and made clear that it would be business as usual in the meantime.	Gary Cox	<p>Work ongoing to implement modernisation programme to improve reliability and sustainability of H&I air services and ensure HIAL Airports are not left behind global shift to new ATC technology and procedures. Following a detailed study and consultation with staff, HIAL Board decided that the Central Surveillance Centre will be located in Inverness with an existing building secured. Decision also taken by HIAL to move Wick and Benbecula Airports to an Aerodrome Flight Information Service (as already in place at Barra, Tiree and Campbeltown) to better reflect volume and nature of flights at these airports. Although Islands Act section on Impact Assessment is not yet in force and guidance has not been issued by SG, an Islands Impact Assessment on the programme is being carried out by an independent consultant.</p> <p>Engagement continues with staff, airlines, the CAA and other interests as the programme moves through procurement and other implementation stages.</p>

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Education Reform	Policy Lead	Updated October 2020
<p>Scottish Government will work with COHI partners to bring further focus to the impact of rural deprivation on educational attainment and consider what further support can be put in place.</p>	<p>Chris Gosling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative has continued to explore rural poverty and its impact on attainment, as well as considering possible alternative measures of deprivation. • Similarly, the Government’s work on potential alternative indicators of deprivation continues. A longer term strategy will be required to help address the impact the pandemic has had on some of the most vulnerable children and families. The implementation of an Equity Audit will deepen our understanding of the impact of on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and set clear areas of focus for accelerating recovery. Work on the equity audit has commenced and will report in full in December. It will include a synthesis of key literature and be supplemented with local evidence gathered from LAs, schools and other children’s services. It is an important part of the recovery process and will help inform future policy and practice. • Funding to the Child Poverty Action Group has been increased over the next 2 years to extend their work on cost of the school day projects and work to raise poverty awareness issues in schools and LAs across Scotland, with a particular focus on rural areas. • £93,905 will be allocated in 2020/21 and £92,780 will be allocated in 2021/22. • CPAG have launched a Cost of the School Day project in Moray and are working with other Northern Alliance councils to mitigate the impact of poverty in relation to school costs.