

POPULATION: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE

Overview:

1. This joint-paper is brought to the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI) meeting in March 2021 on behalf of the Scottish Government's Population Programme and the COHI Officers Population Working Group. It follows the evidence paper produced by the COHI Senior Officers Group on '[Population and Fragile Communities](#),' which was presented at COHI in October 2020.
2. The paper outlines work on population being undertaken at both the national and the regional level, and divides into the following sections:
3. From the Scottish Government's Population Programme (*Section 1*), an update is provided on the work of the Scottish Government's Ministerial Population Taskforce. In particular, it focusses on the Scottish Government's first national Population Strategy, "*A Scotland for the Future: The Challenges and Opportunities of Scotland's Changing Population*" - to go live on 15th March.
4. From the COHI Officers Population Working Group (*Section 2*), an update is given on the progress of the Group following on from the actions agreed in October – particularly in regard to work around concept of 'repopulation zones.'
5. *Section 3* sets out an early collaborative Action Plan between the Scottish Government's Population Programme and the COHI Officers Population Working Group, to find the correct balance of high-level, national policy and specific, targeted, local area interventions to address the unique demographic challenges felt by communities in the Highlands and Islands.
6. *Section 4* set outs the recommendations for COHI members to endorse and support.

Section 1: National Population Update – Scottish Government: Publication of Scotland's first Population Strategy

7. In 2019, the Scottish Government established the Ministerial Population Taskforce to address Scotland's future population challenges. Chaired by Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, the Taskforce brings together Scottish Ministers across key policy areas. The Taskforce is also supported by the Population Programme Board for Directors, which brings together senior officials from Scottish Government, partner organisations and local government.
8. As a result of a major piece of work, on 15th March the Ministerial Population Taskforce will publish Scotland's first national population strategy, "*A Scotland for the Future: The Challenges and Opportunities of Scotland's Changing Population*,"
9. The Strategy frames the diverse and cross-cutting demographic challenges that Scotland faces at both a national and local level. Using demographic trends and projections, it outlines why each of these challenges is vital to the long-term sustainability of our economy, public services, and communities as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

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10. Importantly, the Strategy sets out a coherent programme of work that brings together existing government policy (i.e. the National Islands Plan, the Inward Investment Plan, the Future Skills Action Plan, Housing to 2040, and others) to demonstrate we are not starting with a blank page. However, the Strategy also highlights where more intervention is needed to address demographic challenges and harness new opportunities.
11. The Scottish Government acknowledges this is just the beginning of a conversation. As a first step, the Strategy sets out 36 initial actions, including a series of next steps for the Scottish Government's Population Programme to engage the public, other political parties and other partners from both the public and private sector, as well as influence wider decision making, establish measurement frameworks, and begin to build intervention-focused coalitions around the issue of demographic change.
12. Much of the local level evidence of past population trends and future projections is already known to COHI, following previous papers to the Convention in October 2019 and October 2020. The strategy sets out what demographic indicators tell us at the national level – in terms of our population's history, its present, and its future.

Vision to address Scotland's demographic challenges:

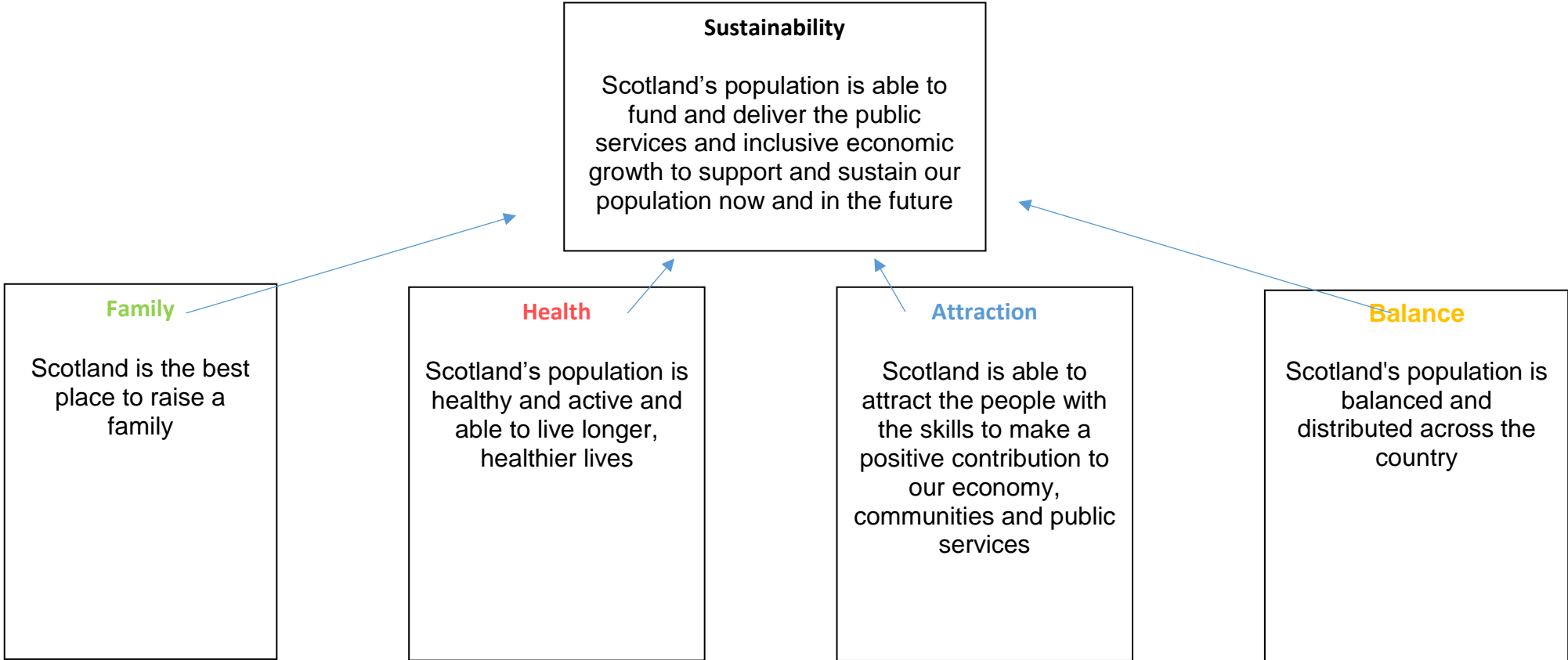
13. At its heart, the Strategy recognises that in order to achieve a sustainable population for our future, population change must be seen as a **national challenge** which the Scottish Government cannot respond to alone. Firstly, we would encourage COHI members to recognise this and agree to support the Scottish Government in addressing this challenge.
14. To address the challenges we face as a nation and provide a framework to structure our current actions and guide future engagement and policy development, the Strategy sets out four 'building blocks'. These 'blocks', which will serve as distinct work streams for the Population Programme in its next steps, are:
 - **'A Family Friendly Nation'** – *As Scotland's birth rate is falling (the lowest in the UK), we must ensure that Scotland is the best place to raise a family.*
 - **'A Healthy Living Society'** – *As Scotland's population ages, we must ensure that our people are healthy, active and able to live longer, healthier lives.*
 - **'An Attractive and Welcoming Country'** - *As Freedom of Movement ends, Scotland needs to be able to attract the people with the skills to make a positive contribution to our economy, communities and public services*
 - **'A More Balanced Population'** – *With rural communities and those in the West experiencing population decline, while many in the East experience increased population growth, we must ensure our population is more balanced and distributed across Scotland so all our communities can flourish.*
15. Addressing population change is a long-term ambition which will require sustained and cohesive actions across a wide range of policy areas. It is therefore important – at the outset of our Population Programme – to identify a number of principles that underpin our vision as it develops.

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Scotland's Demographic Challenge: What is our vision?

The Scottish Government's aim is to make communities across Scotland attractive places to live, work, bring up families and to move to; so that Scotland's population profile provides a platform for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and wellbeing



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16. This vision has been deliberately designed to be stretching. It serves as a mechanism that not only can pull together existing Scottish Government policy and planning, but also challenges the Scottish Government and partners to do more. Both in terms of addressing Scotland's long-term population change, but also generating the agile policy responses needed to meet the diverse and urgent population needs of different communities today.

17. In supporting this vision, the population strategy lists a number of actions that need to be undertaken to achieve this outcome. The actions can be summarized as:

i) Taking a place-based approach to demography

Place must be at the centre of the answer to our demographic challenge. Our economy, infrastructure, housing and public services are all driven by taking a place-based whole-system approach. The paper commits to explore opportunities around our anchor institutions, ensure our economic development is regionally targeted and our housing supply, transport links and public services are fit for purpose across all of Scotland.

ii) Considering the impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted our lives in ways we could not have imagined. We must ensure that our communities that were already experiencing health and wealth inequalities are supported now, more than ever, to become vibrant and sustainable communities. The paper commits to continue to support these communities, but we must also explore the consequences of the pandemic. It also promises to look at improving opportunities around remote working, the creation of community work hubs and the Scottish Government's own workplace footprint which has been raised previously at COHI.

iii) Attracting people and business to Scotland

Inward migration is currently the sole reason for Scotland's population growth and is projected to be so in years to come. We must ensure that growth is not impacted by the UK Government's new immigration system. The paper commits to continuing to push for a migration system that works for Scotland, developing evidence based, deliverable policy proposals working in partnership to deliver solutions. In addition to seeking to attract people from the EU and internationally we will also continue to attract those from elsewhere in the UK who may wish to make Scotland home and retain those who already live here.

iv) Working with our partners

Scottish Government cannot deliver this change on its own. We commit to work with our national partners (within both the public and private sector) and local government to explore options to address both national and local demographic challenges. We also call on the UK Government to work with us in areas of reserved matters, such as migration and parental leave, which can help influence change.

v) Building a programme of engagement

As this is just the start of the programme, we commit to engaging with all parts of Scottish society, from private sector to the third sector; from academic institutions to the public, we will build a programme of engagement, both here and abroad, to ensure the interventions being taken are the right ones for our economy, public services and our communities.

Building Block - 'A More Balanced Population'

18. Central to *A Scotland for the Future* is a recognition that population change across Scotland is not a monolith. Each and every local authority feels a diverse and different demographic challenge across Scotland. Local authorities, particularly rural or remote areas and those in the west of the country are experiencing population decline, while others – predominately in the east - are experiencing increased population growth.
19. However, even those experiencing population increase at a local authority level do not tell the whole story. Within local authorities, such as Highland Council, some areas like Inverness are projected to experience population growth, while other localities within the council area are experiencing severe population decline. This brings about challenges including the ability to deliver public services, recruit those in the working age population to live there and can impact on the likelihood of economic investment in the area. This divergence within each council area demonstrates that addressing Scotland's demographic challenges means a 'one size fits all' will not be able to fix all of our problems.
20. Each of the four building blocks mentioned in paragraph 14 can play a role in addressing the population issues faced within the Highlands and Islands. However, while family friendly policies and supporting our older population to live healthier for longer are important, it is felt key that the more balanced population block is addressed first, and this will lay the groundwork to support the implementation of the other building blocks. The building block around *a more balanced population* emphasises the need to co-ordinate a whole-system approach to the diverse range of demographic challenges and highlight that depopulation must be examined from a variety of perspectives including access to **economic opportunities and jobs**, provision of **public services**, and **infrastructure** (including housing, digital and transport).

SG Population Programme - Next Steps:

21. As mentioned, one of the key next steps for the population programme is to engage with partners and strengthen our evidence base around what policy interventions we should focus on to address our demographic challenges. Collaborative working and continued discussion between Scottish Government,, COSLA, enterprise agencies and individual local authorities has been a welcome marker throughout the Strategy's development phase. This must continue in order to drive forward this large-scale transformational change.
22. Population has been a key discussion point for COHI members for some time now, and with the publication of the population strategy and this paper, we hope this signals the importance the Scottish Government is placing on addressing these long-term challenges and look forward to engaging with COHI members both collectively and on a more individual basis going forward.
23. While future engagement is important, however, we recognise that interventions are required now to support some of our most fragile communities. That is where the concept of repopulation zones through the COHI Officers Population Working Group has arisen.

**Section 2: Regional Population Update - COHI Officials Population Working Group:
'Repopulation Zone' concept and Action Plan**

24. Following the presentation of the '[Population and Fragile Communities](#)' paper at COHI October 2020, the issue of population decline was recognised by COHI, where it agreed that the acuteness of the challenges faced in Argyll and Bute, the Outer Hebrides and Caithness and Sutherland and the islands in the North Ayrshire Council area requires a targeted, inter-agency policy response.
25. A COHI Officers Population Working Group was formed, comprising of officials from the Comhairle, Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council, North Ayrshire Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. In the intervening months, the Working Group has begun exploring what an inter-agency response to address the acute population challenges felt in Highland and island regions could look like. It is suggested that there is merit in developing a concept around a specifically designated set of areas that may be titled "*Repopulation Zones*".
26. The Group also recognises that alongside the proposal for a scaled up inter-agency response such as a 'Repopulation Zone', there are immediate actions which form a suite of activity that could be progressed in the short-term, both to deliver action-orientated momentum and to act as a precursor to the establishment of "*Repopulation Zones*". The Repopulation Zone Action Plan (paragraph 51) represents a detailed work schedule for the next period that the Group, working closely with the relevant Scottish Government officials, is committed to developing and implementing.
27. An additional consideration of the Group, given the recent development of a national population Strategy, has been to begin to establish a working partnership with the Scottish Government's Population Programme. During its development, COHI Officials have been sighted of the Scottish Government's Population Strategy, "*A Scotland for the Future: The Opportunities and Challenges of Scotland's Changing Population.*"
28. The Group welcomes the vision, building blocks, and next steps that the Strategy sets out at the national level. It also acknowledges the importance of the Strategy's focus on regional and sub-regional populations - especially in the acknowledgement that each local authority area feels and experiences demographic and population challenges differently. An additional focus here for the Group revolves around how best to link the work of new national population framework together with the localised policy responses in the Highlands and Islands.

Population Story: Highlands and Islands:

29. The population story in the Highlands and Islands over the past fifty years has largely been one of growth and success. The regional population has grown by close to a quarter since the establishment of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1965. Between the last census periods (2001 and 2011) the population grew by 7.5% up from 433,524 to 466,112. The latest mid-year estimates (2018) place the population of the Highlands and Islands at 489,330, an increase of 13% since 2001. (NB. These statistics relate to the geographical boundaries of the HIE area).
30. Although the overall HIE area has witnessed population growth, like population change across Scotland, population change in the Highlands and Islands has not been monolithic.

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Positive population growth has not been shared evenly across the area, with the positive regional figures masking a more nuanced picture at sub-regional level.

31. Over the past half century, three areas are identified as seeing significant population reductions: Caithness and Sutherland saw population fall by 3%; Argyll and its islands reduced by 6% and the Outer Hebrides declined by 15%. Forward projections show a continuing decline in these fragile areas with projections to 2041 anticipating a 17% decline in Caithness and Sutherland; 14% in the Outer Hebrides and 10% in Argyll and Bute. Furthermore, over the last twenty years, the fourth area identified as seeing significant population reduction is the North Ayrshire islands of Arran and Cumbrae, with Arran experiencing a population fall of 10.4% and Cumbrae reducing by 9.5% with both of these island population projected to continue to decline over the next ten years. The detailed, underpinning data for these areas was presented to COHI in October 2020.
32. Evidence demonstrates that what was once referred to as the “Highland Problem” has been solved (or is well on its way to being solved) across the Highlands and Islands. Evidence, however, equally demonstrates that severe challenges remain in very specific areas. This issue was further recognised by COHI in October 2020, when it agreed that the acuteness of the issues in relation to population decline in Argyll and Bute, the Outer Hebrides and Caithness and Sutherland requires a targeted, inter-agency policy response.

‘Repopulation Zones’ concept:

33. To create linkages between the national Strategy and to focus a more localised approach to population issues, it is suggested that there is merit in developing a concept and delivery framework around a specifically designated set of areas that may be entitled “Repopulation Zones”.
34. The overarching principle of these Zones would be to be place-based and provide a methodology to focus interventions on specific identified geographies. The work Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is undertaking on their Inclusive Growth Model could help inform this identification. This Model was highlighted in the October COHI paper and has two analytical components. One dealing with the area characteristics and profile and one dealing with the organisation’s investment and its impact. HIE is currently working with the James Hutton Institute and SRUC on the area profiling and area clusters will be available by April.
35. The approach would allow interventions to be targeted with each Zone provided with a menu of tools to drive innovation and to build new approaches appropriate to its circumstances – all specifically targeted on impacting positively on population dynamics. The Zones would operate within the umbrella of the overall national strategic framework.
36. This approach would also have the important psychological benefit of reframing the discussion away from the negative connotations of depopulation onto a more positive, development-orientated repopulation approach.
37. A “Repopulation Zone” would require national Government, Local Authorities and development agencies to focus deep and sustained effort into each Zone. This would recognise that the issue is deep-seated and requires generational effort to achieve the required impacts. Each Zone would be place-based and have the ability to develop approaches and pilot innovation appropriate to its own needs. It is anticipated, however, that there would be issues of commonality across each Zone and that a governance

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structure should be developed to provide direction, share experience across Zones and provide a coordinated joined-up approach with national strategy.

38. It will also be critical that Zones do not operate in isolation and that a methodology is put in place to ensure the cascading of learning out into the wider Highlands and Islands region and wider across Scotland.
39. There are a range of areas of strategic focus that a “Repopulation Zone” could focus effort into. Given the range of challenges in the areas most impacted by population loss, it is anticipated that initial areas of focus will be in relation to:
- economy and jobs
 - infrastructure (including digital connectivity)
 - public services and community

The following provides an overview on activities that will be appropriate to develop under each of these three headings.

i) Economy and Jobs

40. This recognises that high quality economic opportunities and jobs are a key component in sustaining population and that each locality requires a diverse mix of sectoral jobs and opportunities. To ensure maximisation of economic opportunity within each Zone they should be equipped with:
- a bespoke package of business interventions targeted at attracting and stimulating new economic opportunity – that package could be comprised of a range of interventions including capital allowances, rates relief, property rental holidays and enhanced economic stimulation support from the enterprise agencies
 - a focused, place-based approach to talent attraction and retention supported by bespoke and enhanced skills / training packages delivered by Skills Development Scotland
 - an agreed prioritisation plan with national and local government around jobs dispersal / decentralisation of public sector jobs
 - transition plans into the green economy that seek to achieve local decarbonisation and stimulates new nature-based jobs
 - appropriate approaches to Community Wealth Building that drives circular economic approaches and stimulates greater localisation of supply chains

ii) Infrastructure

41. This recognises that strong infrastructure, including accessible housing options, are a prerequisite for a well-functioning economy and for holding population within a local economy. Similarly, a shift to a post-COVID more home-based work environment can only be achieved if the appropriate digital infrastructure is in place. To ensure a focus around infrastructure each Zone they should be equipped with:
- an agreed prioritisation plan with national and local government and relevant agencies around housing approaches / innovation and housing development
 - appropriate tools, including compulsory purchase powers, to facilitate new land supply to support housing across all tenures, but in particular affordable housing
 - an agreed prioritisation plan with national and local government and relevant agencies around digital connectivity

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- regulatory mechanisms to help address housing market distortion through locally agreed market control measures
- an ability to influence transport planning and wider investment into infrastructure to respond to the specific needs of areas

iii) Public Services and Community

42. Declining population has a direct impact on the sustainability and cost of public services. The retrenchment of public sector finance and the centralisation of activity can have disproportionate impacts in communities already challenged by population loss and the impacts of peripherality. This can result in disenchantment and disenfranchisement. To ensure a focus around these public services issues each Zone they should be equipped with:

- an agreement with national and local government and relevant agencies around an appropriate level of public sector resource
- agreed approaches to the accessing of localised higher education, further education, healthcare and childcare provision
- a route map to develop greater levels of local empowerment and localised governance
- an agreed approach with the relevant NHS to identify and address health inequalities.

43. The three identified themes are believed to offer the best opportunity to make a rapid impact on future population prospects within the Zones. To achieve on each of these themes and to ensure a strong post COVID recovery it will be essential that each Zone is equipped with strong, robust digital connectivity. It is viewed as a critical early workstream that digital provision within each Zones is considered in detail and measures put in place to ensure each Zone is digitally competitive with the rest of the Highlands and Islands and wider Scotland.

44. In addition to the above there are also emerging opportunities such as the potential for a pilot Remote Rural Migration Scheme and the Place Based Investment Programme that would clearly have a good fit with the Repopulation Zone concept.

45. Furthermore, a strong and stable economy that holds and grows population, is a prerequisite to allow the Gaelic language and its related culture to grow and thrive. It is anticipated that the package of measures being proposed through the three areas of focus will have a positive impact on Gaelic language retention and development. It will be critical, in the communities and Zones where it is appropriate, that the types of interventions being developed and deployed are sympathetic to Gaelic language development efforts. In appropriate Repopulation Zones there is the opportunity for community-based approaches around inter-generational language transmission to be innovated and pioneered.

'Repopulation Zone' concept development and other near-term actions

46. The concepts outlined in relation to "Repopulation Zones" require to be honed and refined over the next period and there are several critical steps that require to be considered, most importantly the identification of candidate "Repopulation Zones". It will be essential that the specific geography (islands, communities, towns, villages) that would form the Zone across the four identified Local Authority areas are identified at the earliest point.

47. The development of a "Repopulation Zone" will require detailed consideration before the launch of such an initiative could be contemplated. That work will need to be undertaken

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as quickly as possible, ideally to complete before the next meeting of COHI, if we are to address the challenge with the appropriate urgency.

48. Scottish Government officials have been involved in an initial set of meetings to discuss the “Repopulation Zone” concept. On-going collaboration and engagement with Government is considered critical to the continued development of this work. It is essential that the work is progressed collaboratively to avoid overlap, duplication and confusion.
49. The developing of the concept of a ‘Repopulation Zone’ should not, however, inhibit the undertaking of early stage action or beginning to address immediate priorities. Regarding immediate actions the following have been identified by the Working Group as a suite of activity that could be progressed in the short-term, both to deliver action-orientated momentum and to act as a precursor to the establishment of “Repopulation Zones”.

i) Live Local – Work Global: Public Sector Jobs Dispersal

Pre-COVID the Scottish Government, through its growing Population, Communities and Islands teams, had been considering dispersing Government workforce more widely across Scotland and this remains an ambition. Out of 10,800 Government employees, 300 are based in the Highlands and Islands. This is, therefore, an opportune time to collaborate with Government on a ‘work from anywhere’ recruitment culture aimed at delivering a more equitable spread of the workforce. Similarly, when new Government departments and units are being developed, the Highlands and Islands should be prioritised as a location. The benefits of having higher numbers of Government and public sector employees located in the region would have a direct impact on population.

HIE has, in the past, promoted the concept of ‘live local - work global’. There is an opportunity to further develop new propositions and promotional activity in light of recent developments.

ii) Influence Key Partners to Ensure Core Infrastructure and Housing Provision

Infrastructure underpins population and talent attraction challenges. Digital, housing, business property, transport and UHI all have particular roles. Creative solutions to housing difficulties are required to release additional stock across all tenures onto the market. This issue has been identified by Government with the establishment of “Smart Clachan” pilots in the Outer Hebrides and Argyll and Bute. Allied to this is the potential to develop and integrate creative solutions to digital connectivity whereby public sector investment in specified regions provide an advantage through excellent broadband and mobile.

iii) Development of New Interventions

Recent case studies reviewed by Scotland’s Rural College have provided rich information and lessons concerning interventions aimed at attracting and retaining new people to places, especially the young. Examples include the Argyll and Bute Council Rural Resettlement Fund and Orkney’s Gateway Homes initiative. It is apparent that one single intervention is not enough and for real impact a package of measures is required – hence the “Repopulation Zone” approach. A one-off incentive could act as a ‘loss leader’ to promote the region, drive interest to a site / region and provide an impetus for individuals and businesses to relocate.

iv) Grow Access to Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE)

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Every year approximately 2,600 people from the region graduate in universities in cities outside the Highlands and Islands and most become immersed in jobs, relationships, housing etc and remain there. This number has barely changed in 10 years, despite the growth of UHI. In every other part of Scotland, HE is used as an attractor of young people and talent. 30% of Dundee's population is made up of students. Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh soak in many of our young people. The fact that young talent from the Highlands and Islands is fuelling urban economies across Scotland needs to be addressed.

There is also an opportunity to influence the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) review of Coherent provision and challenge the way HE is currently spread across Scotland. It is critical to grow the number of (in particular) degree courses available in the region to either retain or attract students. There is also a necessity to build on UHI's ability to offer blended learning supported by local outreach facilities across all parts of the region.

v) Evidence Gathering

Evidence and hard facts are essential to back-up the need for new policies and investment. There is a requirement to consider a priority list of areas that require further investigation and / or research.

Section 3:

Next Steps: Scottish Government Population Programme and COHI Officers Population Working Group

50. The below Action Plan represents a proposed work schedule for the next period that the Working Group, working closely with the relevant Scottish Government officials, are committed to developing and implementing.

Repopulation Zone Action Plan

51. To develop the suite of activity around the development of the concept of "Repopulation Zones" and also pursue the related near-term actions, the following set of actions are proposed:

Repopulation Zone Action Plan	
Concept Development Activity	
1	Initiate and Resource Repopulation Zone Governance Structure
2	Initiate activity to define the geography and key characteristics of a Repopulation Zone
3	Initiate conversations with communities within the candidate Repopulation Zone
4	Development suite of prioritised Repopulation Zone actions and activities
Live Local – Work Global: Public Sector Jobs Dispersal	
5	Engage with the Population and Migration Programme Board around public sector jobs dispersal and a built-in culture of 'work anywhere'
6	Working with Scottish Government and other public sector organisations, engage them around jobs dispersal and a built-in culture of 'work anywhere'
7	Develop a targeted marketing campaign with the overarching messaging around 'work anywhere' focussed on Repopulation Zones

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8	Develop new propositions and promotional activity around the ‘live local – work global’ approach
Influence Key Partners to Ensure Core Infrastructure and Housing Provision	
9	Develop policies / interventions specifically targeted at addressing the critical housing issues being experienced in areas facing depopulation
10	Develop, resource, pilot and deliver innovative and accelerated housing solutions
11	HIE and Scottish Government digital teams to explore opportunities to strengthen digital infrastructure in and around Repopulation Zones
12	Engage with the Affordable Housing Programme to identify opportunities to make the National Framework more effective / efficient for “Repopulation Zones” to accelerate housing solutions
Development of New Interventions	
13	Explore opportunities to develop a new one-off incentive to provide an impetus for individuals and businesses to relocate to a Repopulation Zone
Grow Access to Higher Education	
14	Engage with the SFC and Scottish Government HE and FE officials to explore issues around the geographical dispersal of provision through the lens of addressing depopulation
15	Develop mechanisms for each Repopulation Zone that incentivises graduates to return to their own communities – this should be developed as a crucial component of place-based economic growth
Evidence Gathering	
16	Develop a priority list of areas that require further bespoke research
17	Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for each Repopulation Zone and related interventions
18	Develop a framework to ensure the dissemination of information and learning from Repopulation Zones out into the wider Highlands and Islands

52. If the recommendations of this paper are supported by COHI, an early meeting of the Population Working Group and Scottish Government officials is anticipated in order to ensure momentum and early implementation of the Action Plan.

53. Ensuring progress around the Action Plan will require sustained effort and the deployment of appropriate human and financial resources. It will be critical that the Population Working Group and Scottish Government identify initial resources and timescales to allow rapid progress. It will also be critical that all partners put in place facilitative policy approaches to ensure Repopulation Zones can develop fresh thinking appropriate to their own localities.

Section 4:

Paper’s recommendation for COHI members:

54. COHI, is therefore, asked to:

- 1) endorse the Scottish Government’s newly published Population Strategy, “*A Scotland for the Future: The Challenges and Opportunities of Scotland’s Changing Population*”, and agree to approach the national challenge of population in a collaborative manner

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- 2) endorse and support the principles of 'Repopulation Zones', put forward by the COHI Officers Population Working Group, based around three themes of initial priority: economy and jobs, infrastructure and public services & community
- 3) endorse and support the Repopulation Zone Action Plan and the themes and related engagement activity within the Plan
- 4) support the deepening of engagement and alignment between the Repopulation Zone development activity and the implementation of the national population strategy
- 5) support that the Scottish Government and the Population Working Group give consideration to the financial implications of the establishment of Repopulation Zones and, as part of the initial development activity, identify budget provision to facilitate the start-up phase