



# CONVENTION OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

## Highlands and Islands Post 2020

### Background

- COHI March 2016 – process initiated to consider post 2020 priorities
- Senior Officer's Workshop in August 2016
- COHI October 2016 – four key priorities agreed:
  - digital and transport connectivity
  - education and skills
  - economic and quality employment opportunities
  - community
- follow-on Senior Officer Workshops in 2017
- over-arching strategic goals
- key priority areas



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### Key Principles

- shared vision
- adding of value to individual organisational actions
- address gaps and avoid duplication
- collaboration
- additionality
- material and measurable difference
- coherence, buy-in and political weight
- criticality of Brexit



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**over-arching strategic goal of growing vibrant communities across the Highlands and Islands through:**

- **population growth**
  - attracting new residents to the region
  - emphasis on mainland periphery and island communities
  - skills to drive business growth and innovation
- **inclusive growth**
  - boosting the regional economy and fair work
  - creating new jobs in key sectors (periphery / island communities)
- **investment in communities and infrastructure**
  - improving digital and transport connectivity
  - building new homes
  - support to sustainable economic growth



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### **Digital and Transport Connectivity**

- modern, high quality, affordable fixed and mobile services are critical
- significant progress but connectivity improvements remain a priority
- initiatives to extend coverage: R100 and the USO

### **Ask of COHI**

- ensure the R100 procurement is funded to ensure all homes and businesses in the Highlands and Islands receive the same mainstream solution as the rest of the country
- explore and utilise the “outside-in” model to prioritise early benefits to those with the poorest broadband speeds in each Local Authority area to ensure equity of coverage in the Highlands and Islands



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### Digital and **Transport Connectivity**

- transport is essential for the economic and social wellbeing
- particular regional challenges – geography, dispersed and island communities, distance from markets and backlog in investment

### **Ask of COHI**

- support and champion transport infrastructure and service improvement across the region where these fit with the aim of:
- deliver low carbon energy based transport solutions with the aspiration to progressively move toward 100% low carbon transport
- deliver infrastructure that provides equal access to services and enables growth opportunities for all



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### **Education and Skills**

- Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan (HISIP) was launched at CoHI in October 2014

### **Ask of COHI**

- renew the commitment to the HISIP as a mechanism for collaboration and co-ordination of the skills needs of the region
- proactive support for The Northern Alliance in its efforts to close the attainment gap, improve health and well-being of children / young people and enhance employability skills
- endorse the Highlands and Islands Talent Attraction, Retention and Return Strategy / Action Plan
- identify local Talent Attraction 'Champions' to drive forward actions



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### **Economic and Quality Employment Opportunities**

- long-standing HIE focus remains valid and should continue - periphery / island communities
- two substantive new opportunities: marine and energy

### **Ask of COHI**

- endorse the development of a regional marine strategy
- support Scottish Islands Interconnection
- publicly pledge to achieve high energy efficiency rating across both domestic and commercial properties
- influence the form and function of the proposed Government owned energy company to address fuel poverty / secure community benefit



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### **Communities**

- housing viewed as a key enabler for economic and population growth
- the right housing in the right place is essential
- greater financial resources than ever before

### **Ask of COHI**

- promote flexibility in national approaches to help simplify processes and help increase the pace of delivery against national targets
- explore approaches to allow greater risk taking (present financial modelling and decisions based on revenue expectation currently act as constraints on house building in peripheral areas)





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### **BREXIT**

- major areas of impact
  - loss of funding and strategic coherence
  - reduced participation in collaboration and partnerships
  - repatriated policy (regional / agricultural / rural development)
  - people: talent attraction / status of EU nationals
  - uncertainty over future trading arrangements

### **Ask of COHI**

- COHI and Scottish Government recognise the specific impacts of Brexit on the Highlands and Islands
- ensure impacts are reflected in Scottish Government policy and negotiations with the UK Government
- COHI members to be involved in and informed about developments



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### Next Steps

- COHI Members to discuss the key asks
- COHI Members approve further work by the Senior Officers Group to:
  - refine deliverables
  - identify risks and resource implications
  - further develop the implementation plan
  - provide co-ordinated action
  - provide an annual summary report on implementation progress