

# **A Regional Economic Partnership Model for the Highlands and Islands**

## **Draft Terms of Reference**

Following initial agreement at COHI to explore the strengthening of regional structures to support economic recovery, several discussions have taken place between Local Authority Leaders, HIE CEO and HIE Chair about the rationale for the establishment of a Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP).

These discussions have identified the potential for a REP focusing on regional opportunities and challenges and the need for clarity in defining the role and remit of a REP within a landscape that includes COHI itself, CPPs, City and Growth Deal Partnerships, and other area and sub regional groupings.

This paper sets out, for discussion, draft terms of reference for a Highlands and Islands REP.

## **Purpose**

The Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership's purpose is to enable inclusive and sustainable economic growth and build resilience throughout the region, by identifying and focussing on areas of joint strategic purpose to provide co-ordinated action in pursuit of regional growth opportunities and to address shared challenges.

## **Remit**

The Highlands and Islands REP will fulfil its purpose through:

- Identifying opportunities for collaborative and co-ordinated action in pursuit of agreed regional priorities, ensuring, where appropriate, that stakeholders plans are aligned, and resources are deployed efficiently and effectively
- Advocating on agreed regional economic opportunities and challenges, and where appropriate leading in discussions with Scottish Government, UK Government and other organisations
- Being future focused in looking ahead to identify emerging regional opportunities and challenges where collaborative action can maximise outcomes and impact.
- Working to understand evolving approaches to external funding and reacting to maximise impact across all parts of the region
- Understanding sub-regional economic dynamics and, where appropriate, formulating solidarity actions to ensure that no part of the Highlands and Islands is left behind

## **Membership**

Membership of the Highlands and Islands REP is likely to comprise:

- Highlands and Islands Local Authorities
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Skills Development Scotland
- Scottish Funding Council
- University of the Highlands and Islands (and SRUC?)

- Nature Scotland
- HITRANS
- Private sector representation - tbc (Chamber, SCDI, FSB?)
- Third Sector / Social Economy representation – tbc (SCVO, other?)
- Other agencies – tbc (eg. Visit Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Crown Estate Scotland)

### **Working Principles**

Operation and governance is to be agreed through discussion as the REP is established. However, it is envisaged that:

- REP meetings will take place at least twice a year, co-ordinating with COHI, though may meet more frequently if required
- Chairing of meetings to rotate annually between Local Authority members
- Attendance from member organisations is to be decided by them, the expectation being that meetings are, as far as possible attended by an organisation's Leader / Chair with support from the CEO / senior officer
- An officer working group, or other arrangement, is put in place to action and implement REP decisions

### **Relationship with COHI and Growth Deal Partnerships**

The Highlands and Islands REP is distinct from COHI in that it is led by the regional stakeholders and has a remit that extends across policy development and delivery oversight. The REP will inform and contribute to the COHI agenda.

The Highlands and Islands REP can complement and add value to the work of existing local authority area groupings by enabling a co-ordination of approach across shared opportunities and challenges and facilitating activity across local authority boundaries, where appropriate.