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Outer Hebrides Migration Study
Final Report

January 2007

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Background

In 2005, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, in partnership with Western Isles Enterprise and Communities Scotland commissioned Hall Aitken and Ionad Nàiseanta na h-Imrich to carry out in-depth research into the issues around migration in and out of the Outer Hebrides. The Outer Hebrides have seen the biggest population decline proportionally of any Scottish Local Authority Area over recent years. Young people from the Islands do well at school and often leave the Islands to study at University and College. Many stay on the mainland to access a wider range of economic and social opportunities. Consequently the area has an increasingly ageing population profile with the highest proportion of elderly people in Scotland.

The Partners have identified a series of challenging evidence gaps which, if filled with scientific research findings, will move understanding of population change forward significantly. The evidence gaps identified in the brief can be summarised as:

o   Predicting population change based on present trends and identifying social and economic impacts and policy implications.

o   Gaining a better understanding of the causes and effects of population movements over the past 30 years.

o   To set the Outer Hebrides within a wider context by looking at comparable areas which have experienced rural depopulation, and to identify successful measures used.

o   To gain insights into the factors that influence out/in-migration of different groups of people and communities.

o   To identify what is needed for demographic, social, economic and cultural sustainability.

o   Carrying out projections of population movements, and assessing their social and economic impacts.

o   Identifying potential policies and practices that can address out-migration and encourage in-migration.

The research has involved a wide range of approaches including desk research; interviews with service-providers and stakeholders; an internet survey with around 1,500 responses from current and past residents of the Outer Hebrides; a survey of employers; a series of focus groups across the Outer Hebrides and on the mainland; interviews with employers and international in-migrants; and a scenario-planning workshop with key agencies tasked with taking forward policies.

1.2 Population trends and their causes

There has been a long-term population decline of about 40% between 1901 and 2001. This decline has been steepest in Harris, the Uists and Barra. However after a long period of population decline there has been a recent upturn in the population.

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Out-migration is still a major factor in population change; particularly among younger age groups. Out-migration is much higher among women and 71% of in-migrants are males. This is leading to a widening gender imbalance in the population.

School rolls have declined significantly since 1975 across the Outer Hebrides. However there have been growing primary school rolls in some Island communities since 2002, including Harris, Balivanich and the North and East of Lewis.

Other recent population trends include:

o   A shift in population towards larger settlements; and particularly Stornoway;

o   An upturn in people choosing to live in the Outer Hebrides because of quality of life reasons;

o   Employers increasingly turning to overseas migrant workers to address labour shortages;

o   More short-stay and 'commuting' workers who leave partners or spouses on the mainland.

1.3   Drivers of change in population

The key drivers of population change are the limited job opportunities available in the Outer Hebrides; and particularly the lack of skilled jobs with progression opportunities, and the limited range of training and education opportunities. Coupled with this is a continued expectation that young people need to leave the islands to pursue education and job opportunities on the mainland. The limited opportunities for women have been widely identified as contributing to the gender imbalance in the population.

The unique nature of the Outer Hebrides housing market makes it difficult for young people to access affordable housing. This may also be a contributing factor in population decline as young people leave to become independent.

The strong sense of community that attracts many people to the Outer Hebrides can also be viewed as 'suffocating and excluding' by some; particularly by individuals who consider themselves to be different. This issue can be a factor in contributing to out-migration. The general confidence and optimism of the community is also seen as a factor influencing out-migration. The role of public agencies and the island media in promoting a pessimistic outlook has fuelled an almost exclusively negative portrayal of the Outer Hebrides in the national media.

1.4   Population projections and their impacts

By modelling current population trends we have developed a model to explore some of the likely implications of population change. This is based on 2004 population estimates, current birth rates and recent migration figures from the General Register Office for Scotland. GROS.

This model predicts population increasing to 2014 and then declining. Although it predicts a higher population in 2019 than in 2004, there will be fewer school age children, working age people and women of child-bearing age. It also predicts:

○ A long-term decline in the number of women of child-bearing age from around 4,500 in 2004 to around 3,500 in 2019;

○ A drop in primary school age children from 2,100 to 1,800 by 2019;

○ A drop in the secondary school age population from 2,100 to 1,900 by 2019;

○ A small drop in the working age population of around 300 people by 2019 – although a much older age profile in the workforce.

○ Average age of the population increasing from 42.4 to 45.3 between 2004 and 2019.

The projected drop of 23% in the number of women of child-bearing age is of most concern and would result in a significant decline in the number of births.

The projected population changes will have numerous linked social and economic impacts and will also affect service provision. The ageing population will have greater needs for health and social services while there will be fewer workers to provide them. In some communities the ageing population is being exacerbated by older people moving in.

There are acknowledged labour shortages in several employment sectors including professional posts in education and health, and in semi-skilled jobs in food production and hospitality.

Declining populations in some communities will threaten the viability of services such as schools, post offices and police stations. More than one in five businesses surveyed identify a negative effect on their business related to population change.

1.5 A sustainable population for the Western Isles

Our consultations and population research suggests that the overall size of the population is less important than achieving a healthier balance in terms of age and gender. Increasing the number of younger workers and women in the population will improve the balance of the community, helping to reduce the average working age and contribute to natural population growth (by increasing the population of child-bearing age).

Re-balancing the population profile will require radical changes in the numbers of in-migrants combined with reductions in out-migration. Because of the impact of past change, the population will continue to show an ageing profile. However in order to stabilise the number of women of child-bearing age and the primary school roll by 2019, the model suggests the need to increase in-migration among under 45s by 40% on 2004-05 levels. This would equate to an additional 185 people each year. At the same time the numbers of 16 to 24 year olds leaving the Islands should be reduced by around a third. This would mean trying to retain 40 females and 20 males from this age group who currently leave the Islands each year.. This suggests that the total population will need to increase to almost 30,000 before it starts to become sustainable in terms of the gender and age balance.
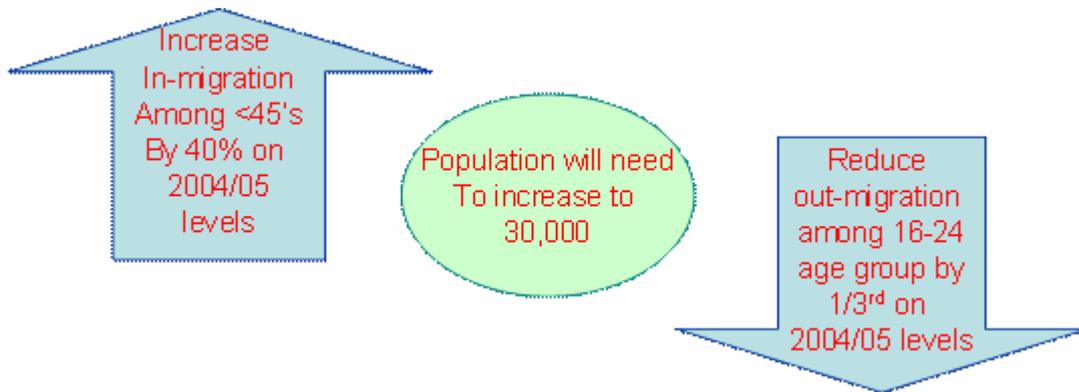
The focus for interventions should therefore be on:

o   Retaining more young people in the local population;

o   Increasing the number of younger women and younger couples in the population;

o   Stabilising the number of primary school age children in the local population.

For those currently living away from the Islands, work is the most important factor. This is less important to those who have never lived away from the Outer Hebrides who only rank work as the sixth most important factor in their choice to stay. For stayers and returners, family, community and a safe environment are key considerations. For in-migrants the natural environment is the most important factor that attracted them to the Outer Hebrides.

So to achieve a sustainable population this would require policies that focus on:

o   Widening employment opportunities for skilled workers, and particularly for women;

o   Providing a greater number and range of vocational training opportunities and apprenticeships that will allow more young people to stay in the Outer Hebrides;

o   Providing housing options that are desirable, accessible and affordable to people in the early stages of their careers; and

o   Ensuring a quality range of social and leisure facilities that are attractive to women and younger children.

Underpinning all of these is the need to retain and market the environmental and quality of life assets that are one of the key attractions to in-migrants.

1.6   Factors needed for sustainable communities

The scenario planning exercise concluded that the key 'essentials' in terms of policy going forward are:

o   Sustainable employment;

o   Private-sector led economic diversity;

o   Housing provision;

o   Self determination; and

o   Clean energy.

Based on the scenario planning exercise and the level of consensus highlighted in our research we have set out the desirable situation for the Outer Hebrides in ten to fifteen years time across a number of themes. We have then set out some of the key current issues that local agencies and communities need to address to fulfil these scenarios.

1.6.1   Jobs and economy

A stable and growing economy based around a skilled workforce adding value to the wealth of natural resources (food production, energy, crafts). An economy that gives graduates and skilled workers opportunities; and choices for employment or business start-up.

1.6.2   Education & training

A strong and dynamic University that plays a wider role in the Outer Hebrides community than simply providing education. A prestigious research centre with acknowledged specialisms attracting highly qualified post-graduate researchers, academics and entrepreneurs from across the UK and overseas.

A joined up programme of vocational training opportunities that reflects and prioritises the needs of the local labour market. Flexible English and Gaelic language courses are available for the growing in-migrant members of the community.

Continuing high quality schools that provide the best modern facilities and teaching standards. Gaelic medium teaching is at the heart of a growing Gaelic language revival.

1.6.3   Housing

A strong, flexible and sustainable housing market that provides affordable opportunities for people at all stages in household formation to access suitable housing. A bold housing strategy that reflects the role of Stornoway and Balivanich as the key focus for the growing Hebridean economy and balances it with the need to regenerate remote rural communities.

1.6.4   Transport

An integrated and affordable transport network between and to the Islands which maximises opportunities and minimises barriers to economic growth. Subsidies are deployed fairly across transport modes to address issues of peripherality and market failure in existing services.

1.6.5   Health & care

A high quality community-focused health and social care service that is recognised as leading good practice in rural health-care. A flexible and skilled workforce in the health and care sector who feel challenged and rewarded.

1.6.6 Confidence & self-determination

Proud, confident and forward-looking communities strive for a continuing high quality of life and want to play a greater part in shaping their own future. Communities recognise that change and diversity are essential but want to retain those defining features which make the Outer Hebrides unique: landscape, religion, Gaelic language and heritage.

1.6.7 Integrating migrants

There is a coordinated programme of support measures for employers and in-migrants that recognises the basic needs of these workers and their wider value to the economy and to sustaining services and communities. The Outer Hebrides communities welcome and support in-migrants and the skills and diversity they bring. In-migrants recognise that they are part of a unique culture and feel able to play a part in it.

1.6.8 Broadband

Information and Communication Technology is at the heart of a strong knowledge-based sector. The Outer Hebrides is recognised as a location with state of the art ICT that is accessible, reliable and affordable.

1.6.9 Leisure & culture

Cultural facilities and events provide residents and visitors with unique opportunities to widen their perspectives and exchange experiences. Leisure and recreation facilities promote enjoyment, health and well-being, and support sporting excellence among all sections of the Outer Hebrides community.

1.6.10 Environment & quality of life

An unrivalled clean and attractive natural environment continues to attract both visitors and new residents to the Outer Hebrides. The beauty of the natural landscape is protected from damaging development.

1.7 Key policy priorities

Clearly there are limited resources to take action to support population sustainability so it will be important to prioritise actions.

1.7.1   Multi-agency Working Group

The first action should be the formation of a multi-agency working group (possibly a sub-group reporting to the Community Planning Partners). This group should initially look to:

o   conduct a review of current (high level) strategies / policies, noting where there is alignment to sustainable population objectives; and identifying potential areas for joint working

o   develop an action plan on migration and

o   investigate ways of migration proofing policies in the future.

And all the priority actions should be taken forward through meaningful joint working, where each agency adds value to the project.

The initial priorities of these agencies should be:

Developing enterprise

Promoting wider job opportunities through developing enterprise. This should involve proactive work with existing self-employed, bringing in enterprising role models and developing generous incentives to promote enterprise as an option. There should be a specific project targeting women into enterprise.

Key policy recommendations are:

o   Carrying out a survey of sole traders and lifestyle entrepreneurs to assess their potential for growth and joint working

o   Identifying, and developing a network among, successful entrepreneurs with a local connection to involve in enterprise education

o   Developing and seeking funding for a specific programme to get women to start their own businesses

Supporting housing requirements

Supporting the housing requirements of in-migrants and returners through the existing housing strategy and taking forward related construction sector training and growth initiatives. This provides a potential win-win scenario of increasing housing choice as well as providing employment opportunities for stayers and growing the economy.

Key policy recommendations are:

o   Developing a construction sector apprenticeship programme linked to the Housing Strategy

o   Carrying out research into the growth potential of the indigenous construction sector

- Developing a schools project to promote the construction sector as a potential business opportunity or career

Supporting growth at UHI

Developing and supporting the growth of UHI at Lews Castle. UHI provides an opportunity to attract back young graduates and professionals to postgraduate research and jobs outside the public sector. At the same time specialist courses can attract students from across the UK. Research projects linked to the environment, energy and health can also create spin-off opportunities for business growth.

Key policy recommendations are:

- Developing a joint programme of research studentships linked to key economic growth sectors
- Promoting secondment opportunities to staff in the key public sector agencies
- Providing practical and in-kind support to assist research projects

Integrating in-migrants

In-migrants will be the mainstay of population and workforce growth in the short to medium term. It will be important that they continue to view the Outer Hebrides as a welcoming place with future potential. Agencies will need to develop joint support services to help in-migrants to integrate effectively into their jobs and communities. These measures should also include awareness raising, capacity building and support for existing communities to help them with the process of integration.

Key policy recommendations are:

- Developing a welcome pack for migrants in web-based and hard copy format that provides information and orientation on employment and welfare issues
- Recruiting migrant outreach workers to act as intermediaries between workers and agencies
- Assessing the current and future training needs of migrant workers, including ESOL, ICT and vocational training needs

Engaging young people and out-migrants

Engaging young people and out-migrants will be key to either retaining them or attracting them back. Hebrideans have a strong emotional bond with 'home' and agencies need to make sure that they are able to get involved in decision-making and wider community life. Giving young people a stake in local decision-making will increase their sense of connection to the Islands and make it more likely that they will return after their education. Developing facilities that are attractive to women and young families will also be important in retaining young people and families with children. Out-migrants also need to access practical information on jobs, housing, transport, events and other news. The internet provides clear opportunities to improve connections between the community on and off the Islands.

Key policy recommendations are:

- Improving access to information on the islands and job opportunities for those who have left through developing an online website such as www.workhebrides.com

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- Investigating the feasibility of providing graduates with incentives to take up jobs in key sectors or start up businesses. These might include subsidised housing, help with student loan repayment and direct grants

- Increasing civic engagement with young people before they leave by building on existing initiatives such as the Hebrides Youth Parliament

- Engaging with local media and developing methods for promote positive messages and good news from the Outer Hebrides

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In 2005, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, in partnership with Western Isles Enterprise and Communities Scotland commissioned Hall Aitken and Ionad Nàiseanta na h-Imrich to carry out in-depth research into the issues around migration in and out of the Outer Hebrides. The Outer Hebrides have seen the biggest population decline proportionally of any Scottish Local Authority Area over recent years. Young people from the Islands do well at school and often leave the Islands to study at University and College. Many stay on the mainland to access a wider range of economic and social opportunities. Consequently the area has an increasingly ageing population profile with the highest proportion of elderly people in Scotland.

Nationally, the Government is promoting initiatives such as *Fresh Talent* to boost in-migration. And the expansion of the EU has led to some inward movement of citizens from Eastern Europe. However, despite a recent increase in the Outer Hebrides population estimates between 2003 and 2004, the impacts of these factors are not yet known.

Previous research has examined specific aspects of the issues around population change. However the Partners required a comprehensive analysis of all elements that contribute to demographic change and how they interact.

2.2 Evidence gaps

The key overall goal of the research is to provide policy-makers and service providers with clear and robust findings on the implications of population change. The work will also identify policy decisions that are most likely to impact on demographic sustainability in the future.

The Partners have identified a series of challenging evidence gaps which, if filled with scientific research findings, will move understanding of population change forward significantly. The evidence gaps identified in the brief can be summarised as:

o Predicting population change based on present trends and identifying social and economic impacts and policy implications.

o Gaining a better understanding of the causes and effects of population movements over the past 30 years.

o To set the Outer Hebrides within a wider context by looking at comparable areas which have experienced rural depopulation, and to identify successful measures used.

o To gain insights into the factors that influence out/in-migration of different groups of people and communities.

o To identify what is needed for demographic, social, economic and cultural sustainability.

- Carrying out projections of population movements, and assessing their social and economic impacts.
- Identifying potential policies and practices that can address out-migration and encourage in-migration.

2.3 Methods

The research has involved a wide range of approaches including:

- Interviews with around twenty service-providers and stakeholders;
- An internet survey with around 1,500 responses from current and past residents of the Outer Hebrides;
- A survey of employers;
- A literature review;
- Focus groups with Lews Castle students and graduate returners in Stornoway;
- Focus groups with stayers, returners and in-migrants in Lewis, Harris, Benbecula and Barra;
- Focus groups with leavers in Glasgow and Aberdeen;
- Interviews with employers and international in-migrants; and
- A scenario-planning workshop with key agencies tasked with taking forward policies.

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3 Trends in migration and their causes

This section outlines some of the key trends in population change and identifies longer-term trends and more recent trends for the Outer Hebrides. It then looks at some of the key drivers of change and how they influence population change.

3.1 Historic trends in population change

Population change has been a feature of the Outer Hebrides throughout history. In the past, population change has been strongly influenced by wider social, economic and political change. Major influences in the past have included:

o   Clearances and land reform;

o   Agricultural changes;

o   Economic changes;

o   Cultural changes and

o   Changes in aspirations and expectations.

More recently the changes in population can be linked to specific economic and social events. For example Local Government re-organisation in the 1970's that led to the formation of the (then) Western Isles Council created a lot of new employment opportunities within the Outer Hebrides.

There was also an upturn in the Outer Hebrides population at the time of the oil boom in Scotland when the Arnish fabrication yard was providing well-paid job opportunities. The employment in Arnish increased the expectations in terms of skilled job opportunities and earnings which have subsequently not been sustained.

3.1.1   Population change

The historic trends in population are outlined in Figure 1 and Figure 2. These show a long-term decline of about 40% in the population over the century from 1901 to 2001 and a population shift between different parts of the Outer Hebrides.

Figure 1 Population change by parish 1901 to 2001

Parish	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	Change
Barra	2545	2620	2456	2250	1884	1467	1090	1339	1282	1172	-54%
Barvas	6736	6953	6660	5876	5111	4331	3983	3994	3550	3133	-53%
Harris	5271	5449	5276	4468	3991	3284	2885	2780	2418	2120	-60%
Lochs	4733	4750	4396	3849	3111	2456	2167	2319	1957	1814	-62%
North Uist	3891	3677	3223	2827	2221	1925	1722	1727	1649	1521	-61%
South Uist	5516	5383	4844	4236	3764	3997	3871	4451	4120	3200	-42%
Stornoway	12983	13438	13366	12116	12791	12717	12232	13409	12733	12015	-7%
Uig	4497	4462	3956	3364	2718	2430	1947	1824	1661	1527	-66%
Outer Hebrides	46172	46700	44000	39000	35000	32500	29900	31800	29330	26502	-43%

Source: GROS 2001

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The population decline over this period was steepest in the parishes of Harris, rural parts of Lewis and on Barra, as Figure 2 shows. The population decline in the Uists has followed a similar pattern to the Outer Hebrides population as a whole, although the decline is slightly greater than the total for the Islands. However the population of the parish of Stornoway has remained relatively stable over this longer time period. This highlights the movement of population away from more rural communities towards the Broadbay area as a long-standing trend.

Figure 2 Population change 1901 to 2001, indexed at 1901 levels
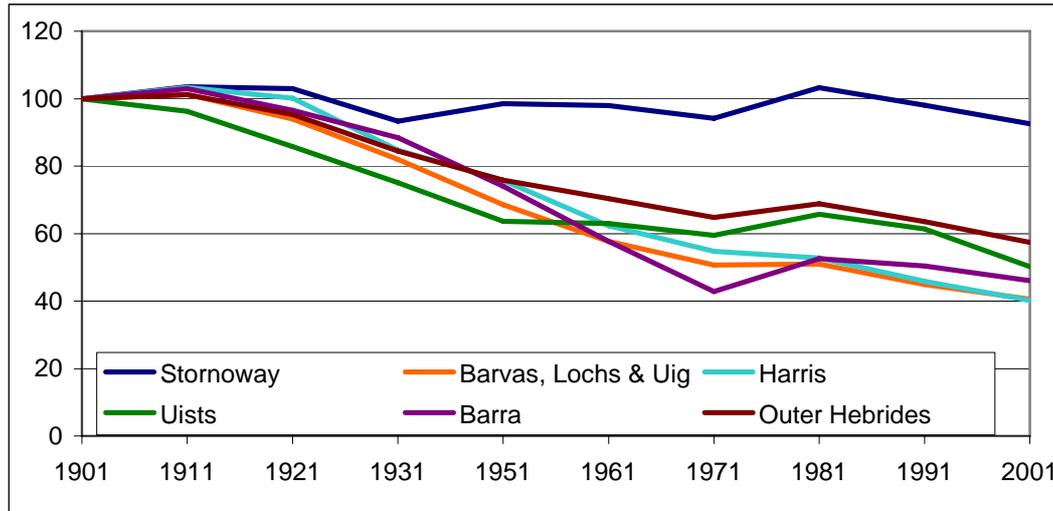
Source: GROS 2001

3.2   Recent trends in population change

3.2.1   Population change

As Figure 3 shows, the Outer Hebrides (Eilean Siar) experienced the biggest population decline of any Scottish Local Authority area between 1995 and 2005. During this decade the overall population dropped by 8.5%.

However this figure masks a more recent upturn in total population. In both 2004 and 2005 the General Registrar Office reported small increases in the population. Since 2003 there has been a 1% increase in the total population in the Outer Hebrides. However the biggest increase was among those aged 55 to 59, which grew by 10% between 2003 and 2005. Over the same time the number of children under 15 continued to decline.

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Figure 3 Percentage change in total population by Council area 1995 to 2005
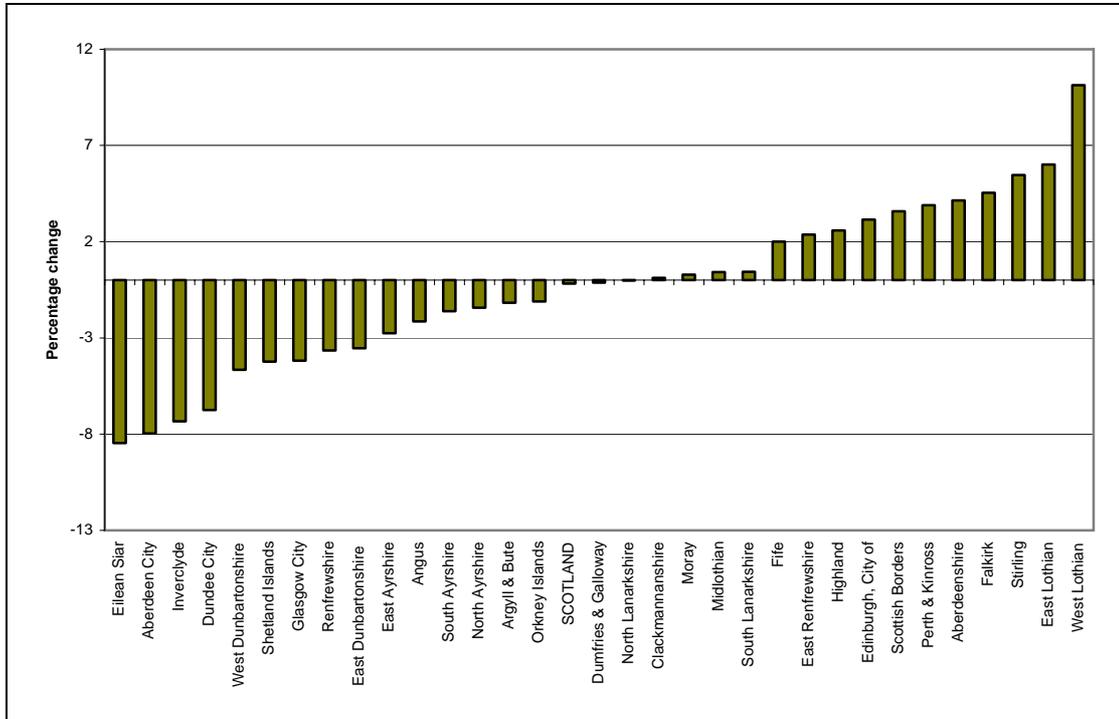
Source: GROS 2006

3.2.2 Household numbers

Figure 4 shows that the number of households in the Outer Hebrides has grown by around 5% between 1991 and 2005. This is around half the rate of growth experienced nationally and in Dumfries and Galloway; which we have used as a rural comparison. As Figure 4 shows the number of households across the Highland Council area grew by almost 20% over this time period.

Figure 4 Change in number of households 1992 to 2004

Source: GROS Household Estimates 2006

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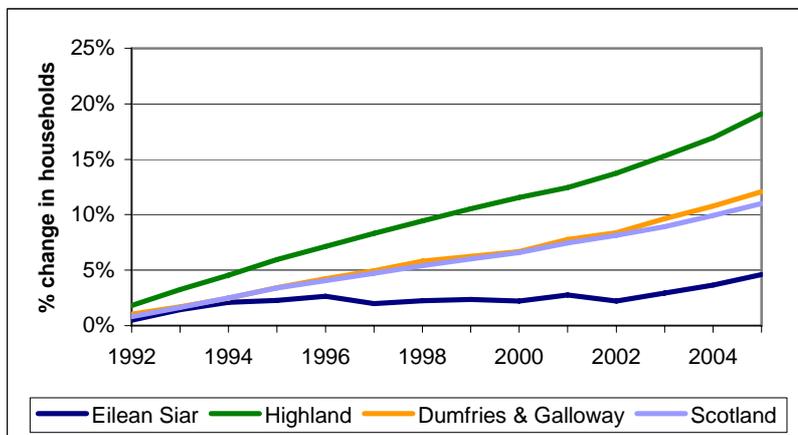
The rate of household growth in the Outer Hebrides was negligible between 1995 and 2001. However since 2002 there has been a much stronger and more consistent period of growth.

The annual rates of change in household numbers in Figure 5 show a changing picture with a downward trend from 1993 to 1997. This is followed by fluctuations in household numbers between 1997 and 2002. However since 2002 there are more positive signs for the Outer Hebrides with growth rates similar to the national level. This recent upturn backs up findings from other elements of our research that suggest a growing population over the past three or four years.

Figure 5 Yearly changes in number of households 1992 to 2005
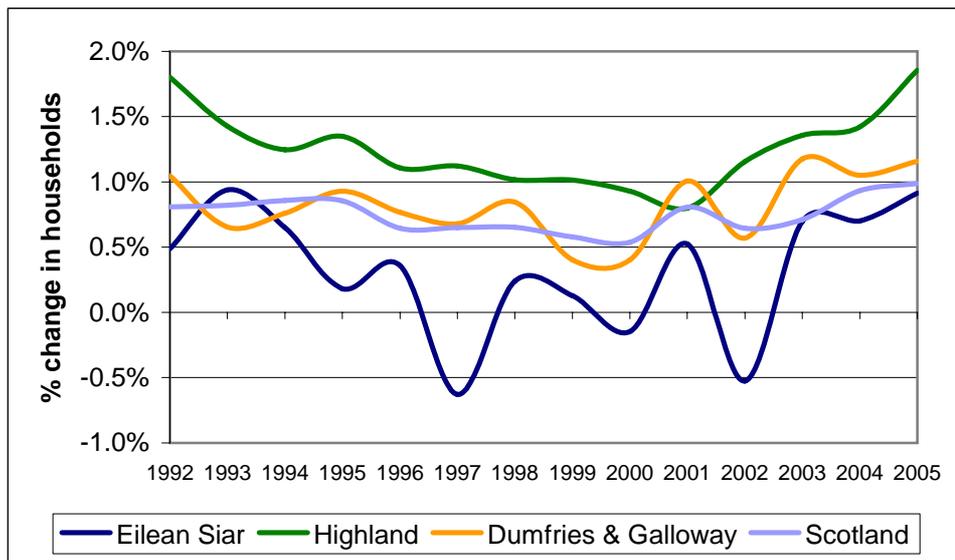
Source: GROS Household Estimates 2006

3.2.3 Official migration data

The most recent migration data available (2004-2005) from the General Registrars Office is outlined in Figure 6 below. The overall impact is a net in-migration figure of 245 people; this is a change in the long term migration trends which showed net out migration from the Outer Hebrides. The chart shows net in-migration among all age groups apart from the 16 to 24 age group.

Figure 6 Net Migration by age and gender 2004 to 2005
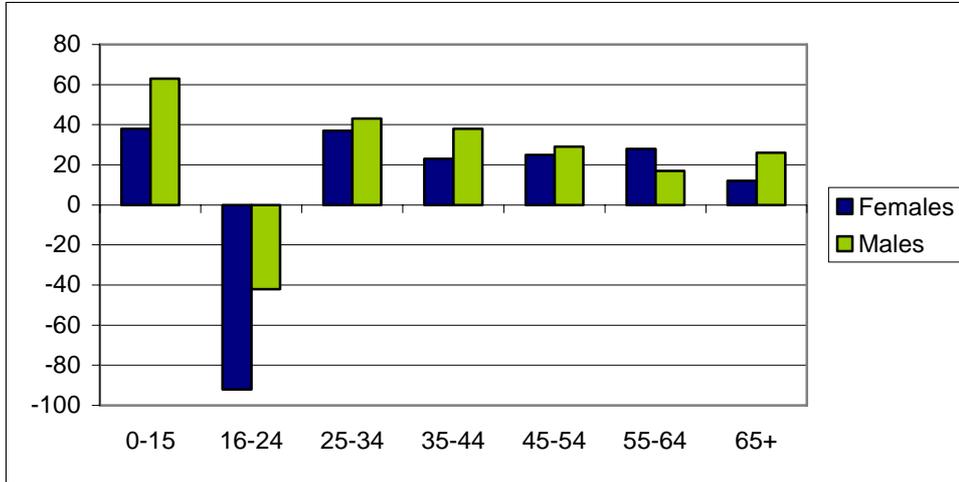
The majority of the net in-migration is accounted for by males who make up 71% of the figure from 2004 to 2005.

3.2.4   Primary school rolls

An analysis of the number of school-age children provides a useful indicator of how population numbers and patterns have changed over the past 30 years. Primary school rolls provide a more accurate picture than secondary rolls as they are more closely linked with local communities. Figure 7 shows a fairly steady decline in all areas apart from Barra since the late 1970's. Barra showed an initial increase in the roll during the 1970's with a slightly later decline than elsewhere in the early 1980's. These declines continued into the 1980's and were steepest in Harris and North Uist.

Between 1997 and 2001 there have been particularly steep declines in the Primary school rolls in Harris, North and South Uist and Benbecula. Since 2001 these declines seem to have levelled out for South Uist and Benbecula, and in Harris there has been a slight increase over recent years. However the declining trend on North Uist appears to be continuing and the long term trends still show a declining roll across the Uists.

The trends in Barra and Lewis show a more stable situation during the 1990's. The Barra roll is at the same level as in the early 1990's, while the rate of decline in the Lewis roll has levelled off since 2001.

Figure 7 Changes in Primary School Rolls by Island 1975 to 2005 (indexed at 1975)
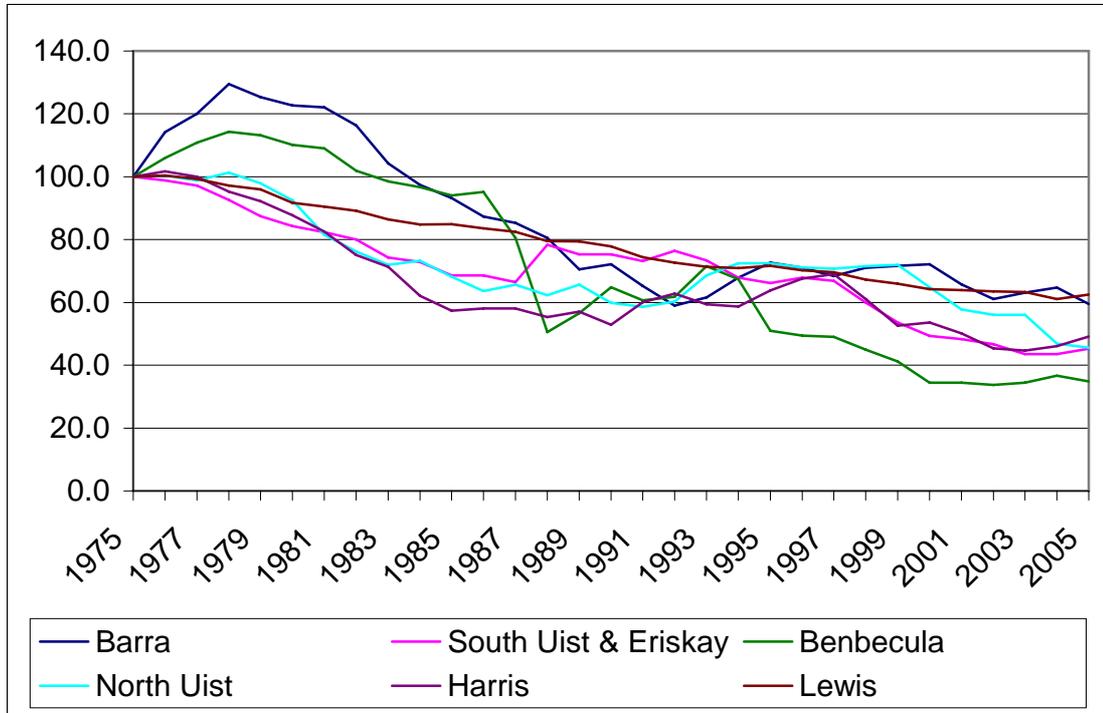
Source: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education Services 2006

There have been different patterns at local area level, with the impacts of causeways, school rationalisation and the provision of new schools such as Lionacleit and Lochs. As Figure 8 shows, there are slightly different trends in different Island communities. Barra shows a moderate but ongoing decline since 1999 and North Uist has also seen a significant ongoing decline over the same period. However Harris and South Uist have both seen a reversal of the declining trend since 2003. Harris has seen an increase of 10% in its primary school roll between 2003 and 2005, while South Uist (+4%) and Benbecula (+1%) have seen small increases. It is too early to say whether these recent upturns are temporary blips due to localised factors or whether they reflect a change in the overall downward trend. While the primary school roll in Lewis has continued to decline, this decline has slowed down since 2001. Overall, primary 1 rolls are currently 38% lower than Primary 7 rolls, suggesting a continued decline in the foreseeable future.

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Figure 8 Changes in primary school rolls by Island and time period (1997 – 2005)
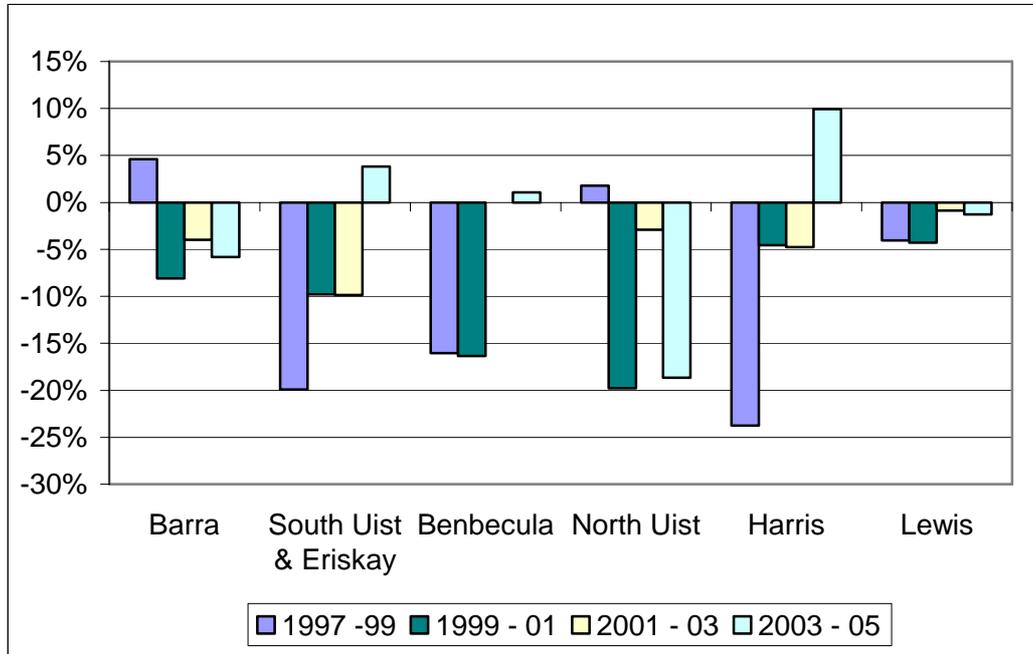
Source: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education Services 2006

Our more detailed analysis of primary school rolls between 2002 and 2005 shows different trends within these Islands:

o Growing primary school rolls since 2002 in most parts of North and East Lewis, particularly Tolsta, Lochs, Pairc (Stornoway), Lionel (Ness) and Laxdale;

o Declining rolls in Sandwick and Aird (Point);

o Declining rolls in all primary schools on the Westside of Lewis apart from Bragar;

o Growing primary school rolls in Scalpay, and Seilebost and Leverburgh on Harris;

o No primary schools on Harris with declining rolls since 2002;

o Growing primary rolls in Paible (North Uist); Balivanich (Benbecula) and Eriskay; and declining rolls in other parts of the Uists;

o In Barra, a growing roll in Eoligarry and a declining roll in Craigston.

3.3 Current and emerging trends

Our research has identified several trends that have only recently started to make a significant impact on population change. These include:

o A shift of population towards larger centres (and particularly Stornoway);

o Lifestyle-based in-migration often to more remote and scenic parts of the Islands;

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o Employers bringing in workers from abroad to fill gaps in the workforce;

o More short-stay and 'commuting' professional workers;

o An increasing gender imbalance in the population, with more women leaving and fewer returning; and

o More native Islanders returning to the Hebrides to look for job opportunities.

3.3.1 Population shift

There is very strong evidence from housing demand patterns, planning applications and school roll changes of a shift of population towards larger centres within the Islands. This is particularly evident in the Greater Stornoway area but also noticeable around Balivanich in the Southern Isles. This has been due to a greater demand for proximity to services, transport links, as well as wider housing and employment opportunities available in Stornoway and Balivanich.

Meanwhile in-migrants have tended to move to more rural areas to take advantage of landscape and a perceived higher quality of life. Most recent housing development has focused on Ness, Laxdale, Point and Lochs; all areas that are relatively accessible to Stornoway.

Council planning policy and the housing strategy have promoted a strong Stornoway as the basis of economic development; and this policy appears to be succeeding. Planning applications across the Outer Hebrides have surged from 450 per year in 2000 to around 700 in 2003/04. This suggests that the Comhairle's approach has succeeded in stimulating investment.

There has been a particular surge in applications for single detached houses and this is strongest on Harris. This demand on Harris has been linked with the positive coverage of the Outer Hebrides through the 'Castaway' TV series and the withdrawal of the Lingerbay Super-quarry planning application in 2004.

3.3.2 Lifestyle in-migration

There has been a clear increase in in-migration to the Outer Hebrides over the past four or five years among households looking for a better quality of life. While in-migration is happening in many parts of the Isles, there is clearly a phenomenon whereby in-migrants are buying up property in more remote parts of the Islands and particularly those in the National Scenic areas of Harris, South Lochs, Uig and Bernera.

However many of the in-migrants in these areas are from older age groups aged 45 and over. Many have either older children or are 'empty nesters' whose offspring have left home. There is strong anecdotal evidence from our interviews and focus groups to suggest that older people are moving to the area because of the perception that health and social care services are better than many parts of the mainland.

There is mixed evidence on how long lifestyle in-migrants remain in the Islands for. Our focus group research, and stakeholder interviews, suggest that most are fairly happy and intend to stay indefinitely. However several people and evidence from literature (McPherson 2005) points to a minority of in-migrants who leave after a couple of years.

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3.3.3   Economic in-migration from abroad

One recent trend which is evident across the Highlands and Islands is the recruitment of workers from overseas to address specific problems with the local labour market.   The recent enlargement of the European Union has meant that residents of these Accession countries can now legally work in the UK.   However overseas workers in the Outer Hebrides are also coming from other parts of eastern Europe and from developing countries such as Sri Lanka.   There is no firm data available on the numbers of in-migrants at any given time because there is no formal process for recording their departure.   Evidence from WIE and from our employer survey suggests that somewhere between 200 and 300 overseas nationals were working in the Outer Hebrides during spring 2006.

The pattern of National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations of overseas nationals in the Outer Hebrides from tax year 2001/02 to 2003/04, broadly reflects the wider trends for the Highlands and Islands overall.   Over the four-year period, from tax year 2001/02 to 2004/05, there were 150 NINo registrations of overseas nationals in the Outer Hebrides accounting for 3% of the Highlands and Islands total.   The registration rate was relatively low over the first three years, increasing from about 10 individuals in 2001/02 to around 30 in 2003/04.   However NINo registrations increased three-fold in 2004/05, with a total of 85 registrations.   This increase corresponds with a rise in numbers of NINo registrations in all Local Authority areas (except Orkney Islands) in the Highlands and Islands area in 2004/05.

From 2001/02 to 2004/05, the majority (about three-quarters) of NINo registrations of overseas nationals in the Outer Hebrides were from the 18 to 34 age group, with just under half of them being aged under 24.   This age profile is broadly similar to that for the Highlands and Islands as a whole, with relatively few registrations from the 45+ age categories.

Figure 9 NINo Registrations of Overseas Nationals in the Outer Hebrides 2001/02 to 2004/05 by age-group
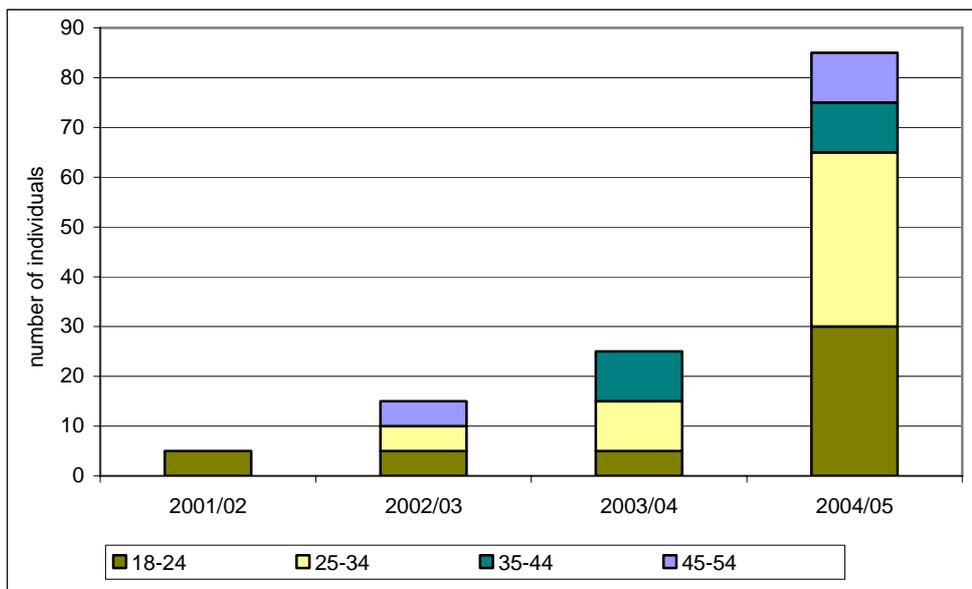
Source: Department for Work and Pensions National Insurance Number Registrations 2006

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Over the four-year period slightly more females were registered for NINos in the Outer Hebrides than males. Approximately 80 women were registered compared with about 70 men. For the Highlands and Islands overall the number of females registered exceeded that of males from 2001/02 to 2003/04.

Figure 10 NINo Registrations of Overseas Nationals in the Outer Hebrides 2001/02 to 2004/05 by Gender
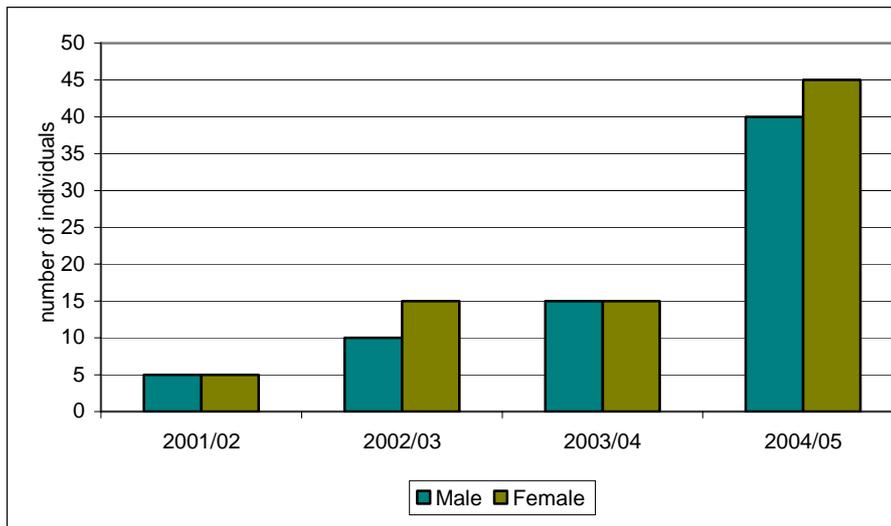
Source: Department for Work and Pensions National Insurance Number Registrations 2006

3.3.4 Short-stay professionals a growing phenomenon

One relatively recent phenomenon is professional workers making short-term moves to the Islands to pursue a career opportunity while leaving their families on the mainland. This may be caused by several inter-related factors:

o   Shortages in certain job sectors lead to employers carrying out wider recruitment searches (e.g. social workers and maths teachers);

o   Employees unfamiliar with the Islands do not want to make the long-term commitment of moving their families;

o   Some employers (e.g. Northern Constabulary) require employees to relocate several times during their service, perhaps making it impractical to relocate the whole family;

o   Some new recruits have problems securing suitable housing;

o   It is often difficult to source jobs for both partners at the same time; so one partner retains their job on the mainland.

This phenomenon is likely to have mixed impacts on communities. On the one hand there is a need to bring in new skills and to fill acknowledged skills gaps in certain sectors. On the other hand, leaving families on the mainland may undermine community services and some of the money paid in salary will leak out of the local economy.

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3.3.5 Gender issues in migration patterns

Our population model based on available population, migration and natural change information backs up other findings that suggest there are significant gender components to population change. This leads to more women leaving the Islands because of education and employment opportunities, and fewer returning. Latest migration data from GROS shows that twice as many women aged 16 to 24 leave the Islands as males; and that net female in-migration is lower among all age groups up to 55. This trend has also been highlighted through interviews, focus groups and in the employer survey. This perhaps also reflects the phenomenon outlined above of males moving to the Islands and leaving female partners on the mainland (we found no evidence of the opposite). One employer states that:

'… in the Uig area it is mainly young girls who leave while many young men stay if at all possible. This will become harder when one of the fish farms closes in a couple of months. Women leave young because there is no suitable work for women although a hardy few have worked on fish farms.'

However longer life expectancy among females means that women currently outnumber men significantly among older age groups; and that the average age of a female in the Outer Hebrides is 44 compared to 41 among men. By 2019 the average age will be 47.5 for women and 43 for men. However our population model suggests that if the current trends continue there will be more males than females by 2009.

And these gender differences become more marked among the working age population because of the different retirement ages and the out-migration of younger women. As Figure 11 shows, there are currently 1,200 fewer working age women than men, and this is forecast to increase to around 2,200 by 2019. This is likely to have implications for the labour market, but also for population sustainability and the social structure of communities.

Figure 11 Projected working age population by gender 2004 to 2019
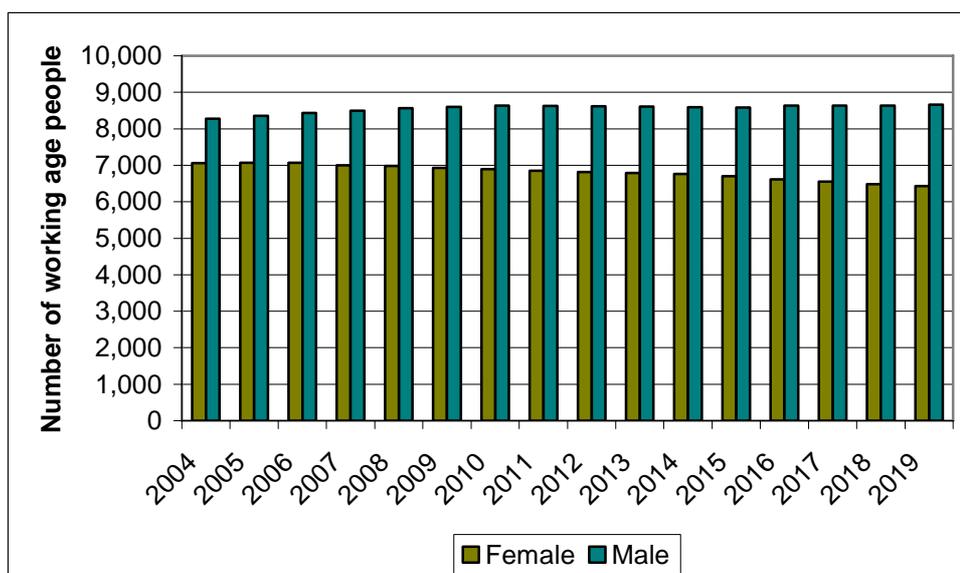
Source: Hall Aitken Population Model based on GROS 2005 and 2006

Our interviews and focus groups suggest a number of factors that might contribute to the out-migration of females.

o The economic and social expectations of women have changed more quickly over the past ten or so years than among men;

o The types of jobs available in traditional sectors such as fishing, agriculture and construction tend to be more suited to males;

o Several stakeholders identify that social and leisure facilities have in the past been more focused towards males (i.e. football pitches); and

o Much of the sector skills training is also inherently focused towards males.

Figure 12 Females as % of 20 to 34 year old population
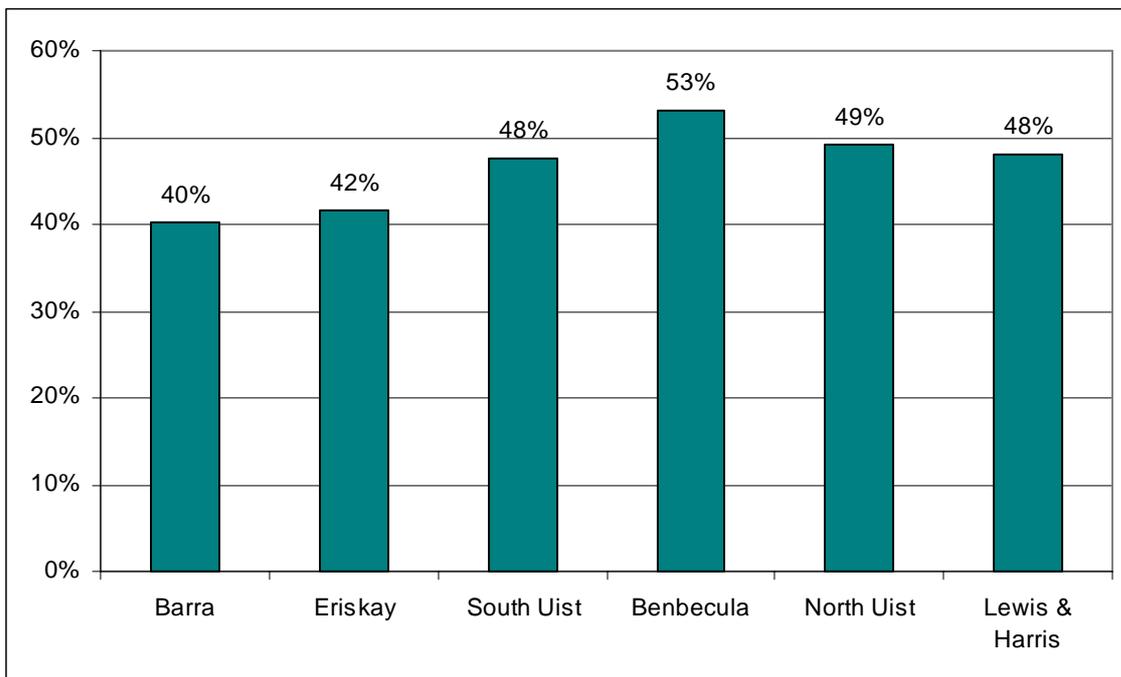
Source: Census 2001

The one community that appears to differ in this trend is Benbecula, where there are slightly more females than males aged under 35 as Figure 12 shows. This is perhaps linked to the housing and employment opportunities, with perhaps the school and education centre at Lionacleit and the hospital in Balivanich providing more opportunities for women to remain on the Island. Interestingly, Benbecula also has the highest economic activity rate of any of the islands which may be another factor behind the retention of the female population.

3.3.6 Recent upturn in returners

There is growing evidence (both anecdotal and from GROS data) that more Islanders are returning to the Outer Hebrides, (and particularly to the Greater Stornoway area) over the past couple of years after completing their study on the mainland. There has been increasing demand for post-graduate study opportunities at Lews Castle College and the number of applicants for Comhairle summer placements has also increased. The M-ploy project that seeks to help graduates to

access employment opportunities also notices increased demand. Several focus group participants have also highlighted this trend.

This appears to be caused by several push and pull factors including:

o The lack of affordable housing options on the mainland;

o The need to pay off student debt;

o The perception of change in facilities within the Islands, with more things to do for young people through the Lewis Sports centre, An Lanntair; Taigh Chearsabhagh in North Uist; Kildonan in South Uist and the Youth Café in Barra;

o A revival in interest in Gaelic culture and language.

However there is a need to ensure that these returners are able to access housing and employment opportunities that will enable them to stay in the longer term.

3.4 Chapter summary

There has been a long-term population decline of approximately 40% between 1901 and 2001 in the Outer Hebrides. This decline has been steepest in Harris, the Uists and Barra. This trend has continued until very recently with an 8.5% drop in total population between 1995 and 2005. However there is more recent evidence from population and household data of an increase since 2003.

Out-migration is still a major factor in population change; particularly among younger age groups. Out-migration is much higher among women and 71% of in-migrants are males. This is leading to a widening gender imbalance in the population.

School rolls have declined significantly since 1975 across the Outer Hebrides. However there have been growing primary school rolls in some Island communities since 2002, including Harris, Balivanich and the North and East of Lewis.

Other recent population trends include:

o A shift in population towards larger settlements; and particularly Stornoway;

o An upturn in people choosing to live in the Outer Hebrides because of quality of life reasons;

o Employers increasingly turning to overseas migrant workers to address labour shortages;

o More short-stay and 'commuting' workers who leave partners or spouses on the mainland.

4 Drivers of change in population

This section explores some of the drivers behind population change. It highlights the important role of job opportunities, educational aspirations and the housing market in influencing migration.

4.1 Key drivers of population change

The drivers of change in population are complex and often inter-connected. While migration decisions are complex, existing literature has highlighted in particular education, employment and housing as drivers of migration.

In the Outer Hebrides changes in migration patterns are closely linked with changes to the economy at a national and local level. Most stakeholders and researchers agree that the key drivers of out-migration over the past 20 to 30 years have been:

o   Declining employment in traditional industries;

o   Limited local employment opportunities;

o   Increasing numbers of young people going into Further and Higher Education; and

o   Limited range of training and education opportunities in the Islands.

To a certain extent these trends are being experienced in many rural areas. However the peripherality of the Outer Hebrides means that these factors are impacting more severely and rapidly than in less isolated communities. Because of this there is also less of a corollary effect of counter-urbanisation; where wealthier urban households move into rural areas, which is a feature of more accessible rural communities.

Other factors that influence population change include:

o   The cost and availability of transport;

o   The availability of suitable housing;

o   The general 'confidence' of the community; and

o   The perception among some individuals of 'conservative' attitudes of some community leaders.

4.2 Declining employment in traditional sectors

There have been well-documented long-term declines in many of the traditional employment sectors in the Outer Hebrides. Employment in the Harris Tweed industry has declined over a long period of time. There has also been a continuing decline in employment in the fishing industry exacerbated by cuts in quotas over recent years. And the changes to EU subsidies have meant an ongoing decline in farming/ crofting.

There is also evidence that a combination of the lack of opportunities to gain qualifications and vocational experience, and the nature of industries found in rural

areas, has led to the creation of a group of young people who are disadvantaged by their decision to remain in rural areas. The predominance of temporary or seasonal employment may be preventing young people from developing 'sustainable careers' (Cartmel and Furlong 2000).

A further barrier to sustainable careers may be the cost of accessing transport in remote areas, which may exclude less affluent individuals from accessing the widest range of employment opportunities (Jones 1992). The high cost of living in rural areas is but one aspect contributing towards rural poverty (Shucksmith and Philip 2000). Stayers in rural areas have been found to be less likely to have received vocational training. Employment opportunities in rural areas tend to require low skills levels, pay low wages, and do not offer progression towards a career. The skills that can be acquired through this employment may not be transferable to other work, and some have reported that there is a risk of becoming 'trapped' in this situation (Jones and Jamieson 1997).

4.3 Limited job opportunities

4.3.1   Hidden unemployed

Unemployment rates in rural areas vary quite widely, and in some instances can be significantly higher than the national average. It is likely that the true scale of the problem is greater but is masked by out-migration of rural unemployed (Jones 1992, Cartmel and Furlong 2000). Across Europe there is a trend for young people to experience unemployment at rates of twice the national average (Cartmel and Furlong 2000). In the Outer Hebrides, one stakeholder has pointed to the significant potential workforce which lives off-island, but which can be accessed when opportunities arise.

4.3.2   Available jobs do not match expectations

In contrast to issues of hidden unemployment, some areas of rural Scotland appear to experience labour shortages. Industries such as aquaculture, food processing, agriculture, and hospitality have had sufficient difficulties in recruiting from the local labour market that they have made widespread use of migrant workers from overseas to fill the gap (see, amongst others, HIE 2005, SER 2006). Whilst some areas of rural Scotland therefore appear to have more than enough jobs to meet the demand of the local labour market, it is clear that simply securing employment may be insufficient to prevent out-migration. In Lewis, many people have left the area despite having been able to find local employment (Stockdale 2004); clearly, there are other factors at work than simply the number of jobs available.

In many parts of rural Scotland, it would appear that the employment opportunities for stayers are mostly within traditional industries, often with low wages and, in some cases, seasonal work. The quality of such jobs may fail to meet aspirations, being low-skilled and lacking in opportunities for progression (Pavis et al 2000, Cartmel and Furlong 2000, Shucksmith and Philip 2000). The lack of security of temporary or seasonal work may be particularly important for those with families, who fear 'the prospect of unemployment' (Stockdale, undated). Qualified migrants who return to rural areas tend to find better quality employment, often in the public sector (Stockdale 2004).

4.3.3 Public sector employment is the ambition

There is a strong view from stakeholders and research participants that much of the employment opportunities are either directly or indirectly provided through the main public sector agencies – the Comhairle, WIE and NHS Board. Many younger people aspire to work in these sectors because they know that jobs are relatively well-paid, secure and have good conditions. This contrasts with the perception of the public sector in many other areas, and perhaps reflects an acceptance that other opportunities for well-paid professional jobs are limited. This is backed up by many instances of graduates taking lower level jobs in the public sector to allow them to return to the Isles.

There is also some suspicion (highlighted in the mainland focus groups) that many public sector jobs are given to people with connections in the agencies.

There is also the perception amongst some rural dwellers that 'incomers get all the best jobs' (Henderson and Shucksmith 1997). A recent survey of home-buyers in the Outer Hebrides found that in-migrants did indeed have a higher average household income than locals (MacPherson 2005).

4.3.4 A fragile private sector

The private sector in the Outer Hebrides is widely considered to be fragile and there are few sectors that are not currently vulnerable to some extent. It relies strongly on local services and small-scale tourism.

Although self-employment is higher than the national average on most Islands this is not contributing significantly to GVA. There is a strong link between in-migration and self-employment in insular areas (Munro, 2004; Nightingale, 2002; Nordregio, 2006). This perhaps reflects the experience of Skye, where self-employment is being pursued by in-migrants as part of their lifestyle choice. These types of 'entrepreneur' appear to have little interest in growing their business, employing other people or collaborating with other businesses. Agencies such as WIE have little contact with these types of businesses who do not tend to look for grants and loans to help with business development.

4.4 Educational opportunities

4.4.1 High levels of attainment

The educational attainment levels in the Outer Hebrides have been historically high and continued to improve over recent years. Coupled with this there appears to be an inherent expectation among Hebridean communities that young people must leave the Islands to succeed. Several interviewees and focus group participants have identified a strong positive pressure to go to college or university on the mainland.

It has been suggested that there is a 'stereotype that achievers leave and the rest stay' (Jones and Jamieson 1997). If achievement is measured in terms of income and qualifications, then there is certainly some evidence to support this view. For example, 78% of those who left Lewis had gained university or college qualifications, compared to 29% of those who had stayed (Stockdale 2004).

4.4.2 Limited opportunities locally

The education opportunities available in rural Scotland are often limited; whilst some local institutions offer higher education courses, these are usually by-passed in favour of further education opportunities available in the larger urban centres (Jones and Jamieson 1997). Stakeholders have identified that young people now have to go to the mainland to get vocational training in some of the skills traditionally provided by Island based FE colleges such as hair-dressing and car mechanics. And one focus group participant felt that a locally gained qualification was viewed as inferior to the same qualification gained at a mainland institution.

For many parts of rural Scotland, education has been recognised as a key driver of out-migration, affecting the younger age groups in particular (Stockdale 2004; Jones and Jamieson 1997). In a study in Lewis, it was found that 79% of out-migrants were motivated principally by education, coinciding with the finding that 70% of the out-migrants from this area were school leavers (Stockdale 2004). Young people in rural areas have been found to be significantly more likely to move away from home than those in urban areas (Jones 1992).

For those who leave rural areas for the purpose of education, many appear to choose to study as close to home as is possible. For example leavers from Lewis were most likely to choose Aberdeen (34%) or Glasgow (25%). Many tend to follow siblings or friends in their location choices. In total, 91% of those who left Lewis remained within Scotland (Stockdale 2004). These findings suggest that leavers have an attachment to their area of origin; some argue that young people are often forced to move away from rural areas by lack of choice (Jones 1992).

It might therefore be expected that regional education institutions would be successful in retaining young people seeking to further their education. However, in a study of education-motivated out-migration in Argyll, it has been suggested that 'young people regard higher education as the most effective way of leaving the area' (Cartmel and Furlong 2000). This suggests that there is an underlying desire to leave the area anyway. It has also been suggested that women may be more likely to follow this path than men, in part because less suitable local employment opportunities cause both a greater desire for women to leave, and can distract men from pursuing academic achievements as local employment is available to them (Jones 1992).

4.4.3 Expectations of out-migration

Given the lack of rural opportunities, and thus the apparent need for 'achievers' to leave, it would appear that in at least some parts of rural Scotland there is an acceptance of out-migration. Some leavers have reported that teachers and family expected them to leave, and that to do so was '*a natural next step on completing school*' (Stockdale 2004, p175). This is certainly identified as being the case in our stakeholder interviews and focus groups in the Outer Hebrides.

Encouragement to leave is a product not only of social expectations, but also of government policy; the target of 50% of young people entering further or higher education (DfES 2004) is, in the absence of regional educational institutions, effectively encouraging rural out-migration (Stockdale 2004). The idea that to return was in some way 'failure' was cited regularly (Stockdale 2004). This 'failure' is on the one hand a subjective view, but on the other hand can often be measured in terms of employment opportunities, status, and income (Jones and Jamieson 1997;

Stockdale 2004). Moreover, it has been suggested that 'self-transformation' can occur following migration, whereby an individual's values and ambitions may change to reflect the society into which they have migrated (Fine 1999). As a consequence of this process, returning home is seen as '*a backward step*' (Stockdale 2004, p190).

4.4.4 Returning after study

After completing their studies, many young people move back to their parental home. However research suggests that these people may end up migrating for a second time. Young leavers may return to live in the parental home for a short period; this may be driven by financial reasons, and in particular the burden of student debt (Pavis et al 2000). Over a longer period of time, however, this second move tends to take leavers further from their area of origin, with greater numbers moving south of the border (Stockdale 2004).

4.5 Transport

Stakeholders and interviewees frequently identify transport as a key factor in decisions around leaving or returning to the Outer Hebrides. Improvements in communications have increased the expectations of young people to travel; and most agree that the ability to travel and widen social and cultural perspectives can strengthen communities. However the high cost of ferry and air travel makes travel more difficult and exacerbates the isolation that many younger islanders feel.

Most people accept that public transport within the Isles has improved significantly since the mid nineties; although the programme of causeways has not stemmed declining school rolls in some of the smaller Islands. The level of bus services available within the Isles are seen as good compared to other remote parts of the UK.

4.6 Housing

4.6.1 The Outer Hebrides housing market

Issues around the housing market are frequently identified as a contributing factor to out-migration among younger age groups in the Outer Hebrides and in the literature (Bevan and Rhodes 2005, Hope et al 2004). The housing 'market' in the Outer Hebrides is fairly unique in the way it has traditionally operated. Some key factors include:

o   A high proportion of detached houses;

o   A high proportion of self-build;

o   A high proportion of ownership;

o   An expectation of a house as a home for life;

o   Low turnover of rented accommodation; and

o   High levels of second and holiday homes in some areas.

The housing market in the Outer Hebrides has until recently operated largely as a localised internal market with only limited influence from the wider market. There

has always been a strong link between crofting and self-build with most Hebrideans aspiring to build themselves a home that will meet their household's long-term housing aspirations. There has therefore not traditionally been a property ladder as such in the Outer Hebrides housing market with few smaller starter homes available. The rented sector provided access to housing for those with no access to crofting land or lacking the resources to purchase.

In some of the smaller island communities such as Barra the housing market is even more constrained. Most houses are passed on through families and there are very few houses in walk-in condition that become available on the market.

4.6.2   Recent housing trends

With an increase in the number of households, including increased demand from people moving from the mainland, house prices have started to increase at similar rates to nationally. While the actual prices are still low compared to national figures, the rate of increase has been relatively sharp. There is some evidence that in-migrants have been taking advantage of the comparatively cheap house prices in the Outer Hebrides by selling homes in areas where property prices have increased by far higher levels, which places them in a strong position to compete with locals in the housing market.

4.6.3   Access to affordable housing

Young people returning to live in the Isles are often unable to enter the housing market unless their family have available land. They are often forced to stay with their family until they can afford to enter the housing market. Leavers have identified housing problems as one of their reasons for not returning to Lewis (Stockdale undated), and it is thought that 'the supply of low-cost housing is a critical issue in retaining population' (Hope et al 2004 p3). The evidence from a relatively strong supply of low-cost housing in Balivanich after the MOD moved out is that this has helped to sustain a more balanced population. In particular the proportions of women aged under 35 are similar to the proportion of males in contrast to other communities.

The housing market situation in the Outer Hebrides reflects a wider situation across Scotland, and mirrors the experiences of the housing market in Skye. The key difference with the Outer Hebrides housing market and other parts of Scotland is the lack of an established rented housing market for single people and smaller households.

There is currently a record level of investment in affordable housing in the Outer Hebrides from communities Scotland's affordable housing investment programme, facilitating increased levels of development by Western Isles Housing Associations, private developers and individual households. However, at the same time, the turnover within the stock of social rented housing has declined markedly to around 10% per year. And a significant proportion of the available housing is allocated to those requiring housing through homelessness legislation. This puts a further strain on the property market.

The role of right-to-buy schemes in restricting access to housing for those on low incomes may be a matter of some debate. Previous research has found that right-to-buy housing stock was primarily purchased by local residents and was not of

interest to more affluent in-migrants (Henderson and Shucksmith 1997). However it has clearly taken housing out of the rented sector and reduced opportunities to access social rented housing for younger and less affluent households.

Another issue is the link between housing costs and income. As house prices catch up with those on the mainland, income levels remain relatively depressed, leading to housing becoming less affordable for average workers.

4.6.4   Local Housing Strategy

The connection between housing availability and sustainable communities is recognised by the public agencies, and is strongly reflected by the Comhairle's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) published in 2004. The LHS proposes that the housing stock should be increased significantly, including social rented housing to replace local authority homes purchased through the 'right to buy' scheme. At present new homes are being built at a relatively high rate. Many are individual private developments (self-builds) and are not contributing to the low-cost housing sector (Western Isles Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009). However, there is also currently a high level of investment in affordable housing. There are currently ambitious plans, following the successful transfer of the Comhairle's housing stock, to develop additional new housing to address these issues through additional funding to the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP).

The LHS contains ambitious targets to improve the function of the Housing system in the Western Isles, These include measures designed to improve housing supply, facilitate inward migration and regenerate local communities. The Comhairle, with its partners, is making good progress towards these goals, and is on target to increase the supply of affordable housing by at least 300 units by 2009. The LHS also contains measures to support training and job opportunities through housing development activity and to target the availability of private rented accommodation for younger people in the greater Stornoway area.

4.6.5   Second and holiday homes

In the Outer Hebrides, Second and holiday homes (SAHH) account for 7.2% of total housing stock, and this represents almost 1,000 houses. Other sources also identify an additional 500 to 850 vacant houses across the Outer Hebrides (CNES, ACTISH, GROS, 2005). However in some areas such as Uig, Paible, Harris West, and Barra and Vatersay SAHH represent more than 17% of the housing stock. By comparison the Scottish average is 1.3%. Another recent survey of the Outer Hebrides housing market found that up to 20% of property sales to in-migrants were as SAHH (MacPherson 2005).

A recent Communities Scotland report (Bevan and Rhodes 2005) on the impact of Second and Holiday Home (SAHH) ownership recognised that demand for SAHH has contributed to high property prices in certain parts of rural Scotland. And there is an apparent correlation between the proportions of SAHH and social rented housing in some areas. These SAHH 'hotspots' are linked to areas with an older demographic profile and greater numbers in the over 45 age groups. However many second and holiday homes are owned by people with a strong local connection and leasing out these properties can bring income into the area.

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4.7 Community confidence

One of the less tangible drivers of migration is the general confidence and optimism of the community. This has been highlighted as one of the key catalysts of in-migration and population growth on Skye, based around positive publicity, community cohesion and a wider feel-good factor.

Several interviewees have identified a lack of confidence and self-belief as a factor fuelling past out-migration in the Outer Hebrides. The role of public agencies and the Island media in promoting a pessimistic outlook was identified several times in our interviews. This was also seen to be reflected in an almost exclusively negative portrayal of the Outer Hebrides in the national media.

However there has been a change in this attitude over recent years. This perhaps reflects a more upbeat message through the economic development and housing strategies, and recent investments such as the new Sports Centre in Stornoway, Taigh Chearsabhagh in North Uist; Kildonan in South Uist; the Youth Café in Barra and the opening of An Lanntair Arts Centre in Stornoway. The move towards community ownership is also important in enabling communities to have a greater stake in their own future and allowing a shift from dependency to greater self-reliance. These changes underpin a current mood of quiet optimism among many Hebrideans.

4.8 Cultural cohesion versus cultural conservatism

The strong community cohesion and sense of belonging is a positive factor in making many people want to return to the Outer Hebrides.   Close-knit rural communities have been observed as having the advantages of 'social capital', in the form of networks and bonds of trust between individuals (Stockdale 2004).

However, it would appear that the very intimacy of these communities gives rise to certain challenges. Some individuals can find it difficult to secure private rented accommodation or even employment in rural communities because they, or in some cases a member of their family, have a 'bad reputation' (Pavis et al 2000). The qualities of a community may be interpreted differently on an individual basis; what is to one person 'comforting and friendly' is to another 'suffocating and excluding' (Jones 1999).   A number of female leavers from North Lewis have cited the 'claustrophobic' and 'judgemental' nature of rural community life as a factor in their decision to leave (Stockdale 2004). By contrast, some study respondents have indicated that such close communities are to be welcomed, being friendly and supportive, often in perceived contrast to cities (Jones and Jamieson 1997, Jones 1999).

Several stakeholders and interviewees also identify the disproportionate influence of the churches in some parts of the Isles. While most accept this situation, several people feel that this stifles their personal choices and restricts necessary changes. One stakeholder felt that this 'cultural conservatism' runs counter to promoting economic growth.

4.9 Chapter summary

The key drivers of population change are the limited job opportunities available in the Outer Hebrides; and particularly the lack of skilled jobs with progression opportunities. Coupled with this is a continued expectation that young people need to leave the islands to pursue education and job opportunities on the mainland. The limited opportunities for women have been widely identified as contributing to the gender imbalance in the population.

The unique nature of the Outer Hebrides housing market makes it difficult for young people to access affordable housing. This may also be a contributing factor in population decline as young people leave to become independent.

The strong sense of community that attracts many people to the Outer Hebrides can also be viewed as 'suffocating and excluding'; particularly by individuals who consider themselves to be different. This issue can be a factor in contributing to out-migration.

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5 Population projections and their impacts

This section looks at the current components of population change in the Outer Hebrides and uses these to project forward the population estimates up to 2019. It then goes on to identify some of the current and anticipated social and economic impacts of these changes.

5.1 Population modelling

We have produced a population model that seeks to project forward the current population estimates based on the most recently available information. The key drivers of this population model are:

o   Baseline population in 2004

o   The number of deaths by age and gender

o   The general fertility rate (number of live births for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 44)

o   Number of in-migrants (by age and gender)

o   Number of out-migrants (by age and gender)

The first three are well-documented and easily calculated based on known rates. However there are several issues around the figures for migration. The official GROS figures are based on NHS registrations, which appear to:

o   Under-estimate the number of international economic migrants; and

o   Under-estimate out-migration of young people leaving the Hebrides for University.

There are discrepancies between the NHS based data and the NINo registration data and neither of these sources necessarily record when people leave again. NHS data appears to be skewed towards households with children and older households, whereas NINo data records working age and economically active people only.

5.1.1   Population projection to 2019

Our population model presents a slightly more optimistic perspective than the current GRO projections. This is because it is based on more recent (higher) migration figures. The key issues emerging from this are:

o   Total population increasing until 2014, although the rate of increase is slowing down;

o   Total population starting to decline again from 2015;

o   A long-term decline in the number of women of child-bearing age from around 4,500 in 2004 to around 3,500 in 2019;

o   A drop in the number of children aged 5 to 11 from around 2,100 in 2004 to 1,800 by 2019;

o A drop in the secondary school age population from around 2,100 in 2004 to 1,900 by 2019;

o A small drop in the working age population of around 300 people – although a much older age profile in the workforce;

o The proportion of pensioners will increase from 25% of the population in 2004 to 29% in 2019;

o The proportion of children (under 15) will decline from 17%of the population in 2004 to 14% in 2019;

o The average age of the population will increase from 42.4 to 45.3 between 2004 and 2019.

Overall the population will be higher in 2019 than at 2004 if current trends continue as Figure 13 shows. However this population profile, although increasing, is not sustainable because the school-age, working age and child-bearing age populations are all predicted to decline.

Figure 13 Summary of current population projections

	Females	Males	Total
2004	13,397	12,863	26,260
2009	13,304	13,311	26,615
2014	13,111	13,608	26,719
2019	12,846	13,795	26,641

Source: Hall Aitken Population Model based on data from GROS 2005 – 2006

Figure 14 Population projections by gender
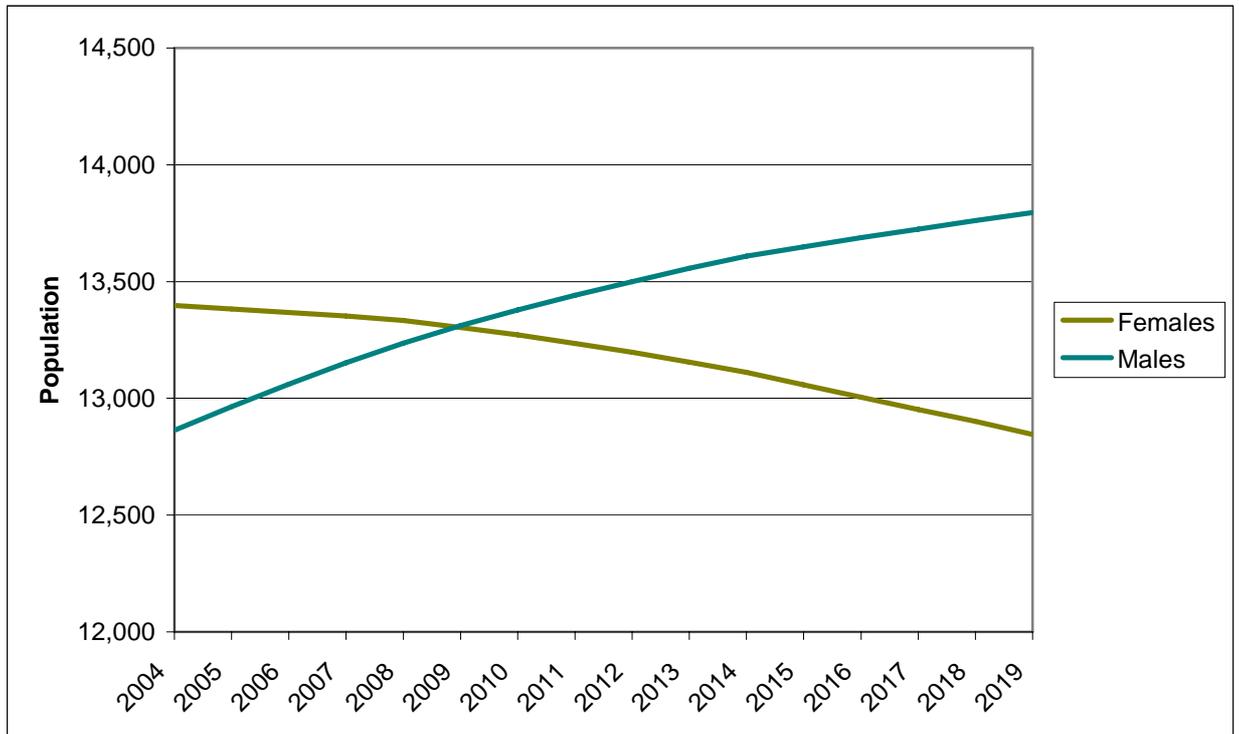
Source: Hall Aitken Population Model based on data from GROS 2005 – 2006

Within this there are important age and gender factors that will have an impact on: communities, the workforce and demands for service provision.

Figure 15 Projected population by age: 2004 and 2019
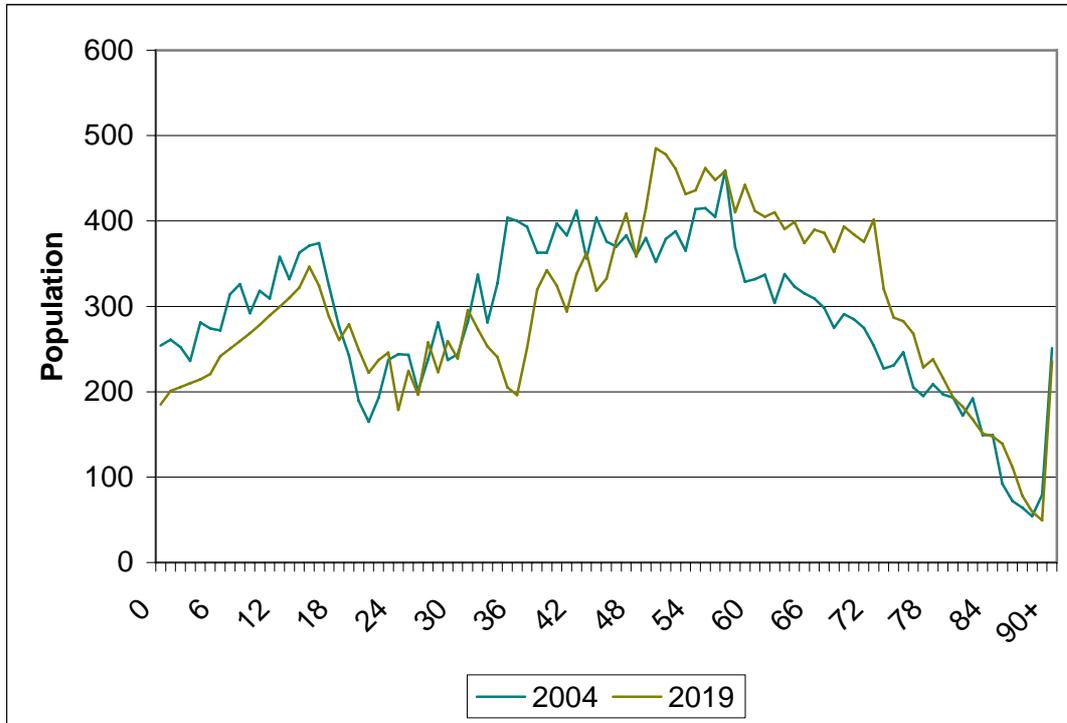
Source: Hall Aitken Population Model (based on data from GROS 2006)

Our projections for the number of school age children are illustrated in Figure 16. This shows a steady decline in numbers and that this will particularly impact on the primary school rolls.

Figure 16 Projected changes in School Age population

Source: Hall Aitken Population Model (based on data from GROS 2006)

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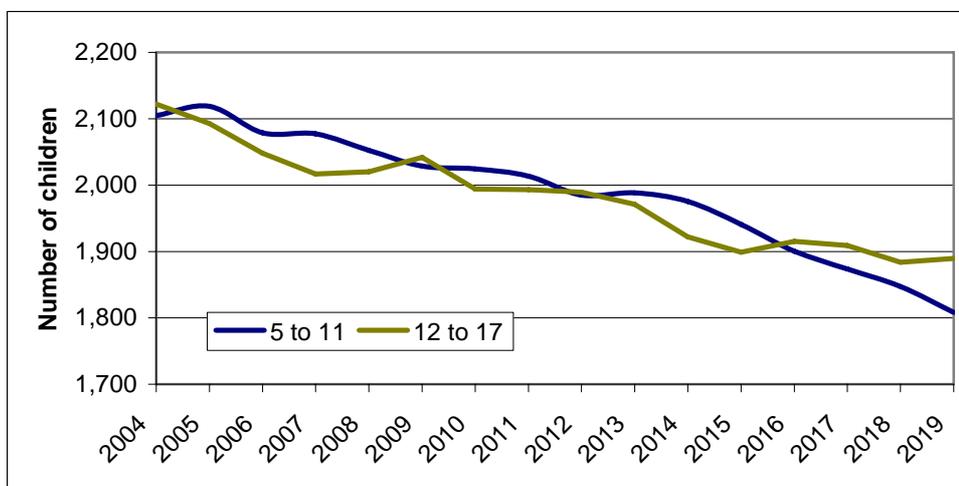
Another anticipated change that will have a major impact on the Outer Hebrides population is the projected drop in the number of women of child-bearing age. As Figure 17 shows, our current projections identify a fairly steep decline of 23% in the number of women aged between 15 and 44. Irrespective of the higher than average fertility rates in the Outer Hebrides this is likely to lead to a longer term natural decline in the population.

Figure 17 Projected changes in number of women of child-bearing age 2004 – 2019
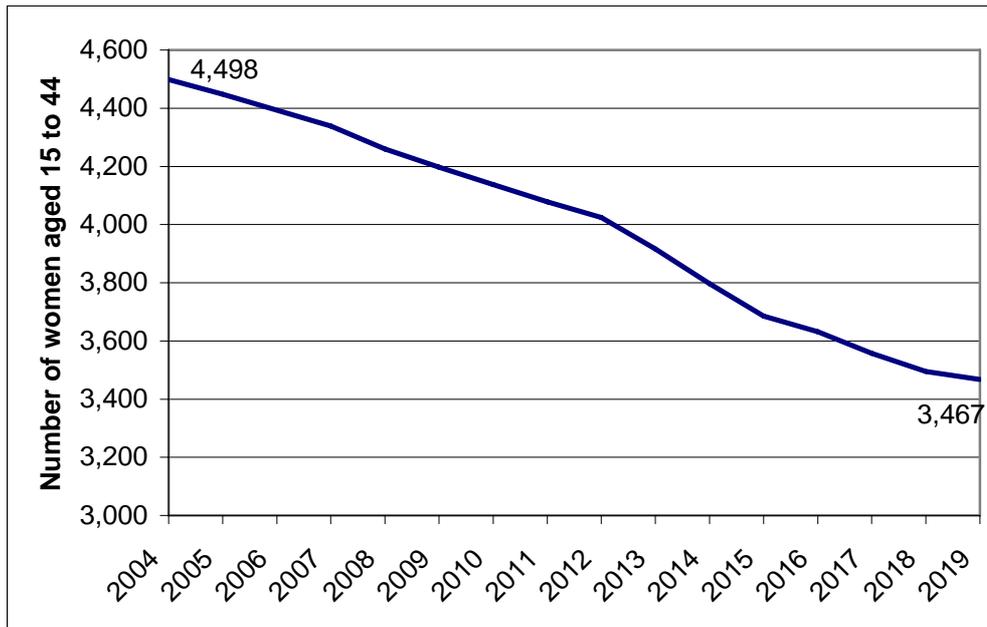
Source: Hall Aitken Population Model (based on data from GROS 2006)

5.2 Social & economic impacts of population change

The anticipated changes in the population numbers, distribution and characteristics will have a wide range of impacts on the local economy and the social structure of the Outer Hebrides. We have sought to identify these impacts and look at how they might influence communities, the local economy and the cost and nature of service provision in the Outer Hebrides.

These impacts are inter-linked and often self-perpetuating. Impacts on the labour market will impact on competitiveness, productivity and the spending power of the workforce. This in turn will have an impact on the economy overall and will also bring about social impacts through new approaches to meeting the needs of the labour market. There will also be direct social impacts from population movements in and out of the Isles. All of these changes will impact on the demand for services, the cost of providing services and the way services are delivered.

We have outlined the key impacts that stakeholders, survey respondents and focus group participants have identified. Because jobs and employment are identified as the key driver of population change we will start by setting out the labour market impacts of population change. We will then set out the wider economic impacts that our research highlights and the potential social impacts that might occur. We will

then identify how all of these impacts might affect service delivery across the Outer Hebrides.

5.2.1 Labour market impacts of population change

Impacts on Public sector posts

Several key public sector agencies have identified problems in recruiting staff for certain jobs. These range from relatively low-skilled jobs to skilled and professional positions. The evidence suggests that skill shortages for more specialist jobs are more evident in the Southern Isles where there is a smaller population and more limited housing supply.

Examples of public sector labour shortages identified through our interviews include:

○ Carers;

○ Nurses;

○ Social workers;

○ Head teachers;

○ Maths teachers;

○ FE Lecturers.

Some of these sectors and occupations have national recruitment shortages which exacerbates the impacts on the Outer Hebrides as a peripheral labour market. There is strong evidence that skilled workers from the Outer Hebrides such as nurses and midwives are being attracted to jobs in Inverness and Aberdeen with better conditions and progression prospects.

There is also an indication that the workforce in several sectors is dominated by middle-aged people which raises questions over the ability to sustain the workforce in the longer term. This has also led to more care sector jobs being made available flexibly with different hours and shift options. The social work department employs 700 staff, 400 of which are part-time. These are based throughout the islands, and are predominantly female. These home carer jobs provide useful local employment and salaries that feed directly into the local communities. The council also has residential care homes for the elderly based in South Uist, Harris and Barra as well as Stornoway. These provide good jobs with training and good conditions. All care staff now are trained to SVQ2 level, which reinforces the importance and status of the job. The home carer posts are flexible and there is a range of 15, 20, 25 and 35 hours a week. However 75% of the 400 part-time home carers are aged over 50 and this type of job is not seen as an attractive career option for younger people.

Several stakeholders identify the positive impact of in-migrants on the workforce. Some turnover of staff is essential to keep skills fresh and to bring in new ideas from elsewhere. This is particularly important, for example, in the health sector. However in-migrants can also bring dynamism and diversity to the workforce and wider community.

Construction sector impacts

There is strong evidence from all our research approaches of a booming construction sector in the Outer Hebrides. This is evidenced by the perceived rising

cost of services, a large backlog of self-build kit houses and the increased planning applications and house-building activity. Added to this are several large-scale investment programmes that are likely to lead to continued strong demand for construction services.

Several stakeholder believe that the pressure for young people to go to university is driving a lack of local skilled labour as young people are discouraged from going into skilled trades. This is impacting particularly on the construction sector which is stretched to the limit. A stakeholder gave an example from his village where one builder who employs another labourer has turned down 5 self-build kit houses so far this year. It is reported that Scotframe who provide the kits for self-build houses have 102 orders for Lewis alone in 2006.

The limitations of the indigenous construction sector mean there is a risk that this will slow down necessary development and lead to jobs and income being leaked out of the local economy.

While the college has tried to respond to the needs of the construction sector it is difficult to plan ahead without wider support and joint action. The problem is the length of time that it takes to train people in skilled trades and the tendency of demand to fluctuate. The predominance of small firms in the Outer Hebrides also makes it difficult for training to be provided speculatively. To help address this issue, the Local Housing Strategy allocates Private Sector Housing Grant funding to increase the number of Apprenticeships.

Issues from employers

Only a quarter of employers surveyed had not experienced issues with recruiting staff over the past year or so. Almost six out of ten employers identify that there are not enough suitably skilled people in the workforce (58%).

Employers tend to identify shortages among unskilled or semi-skilled workers. And it is these occupations that employers are most likely to turn to overseas in-migrant workers for.

Employers surveyed as part of this research have identified several issues that potential recruits for jobs in the Outer Hebrides also identify. The key issues are:

o   Cost of accessing housing;

o   Levels of pay; and

o   The seasonal nature of work.

In-migrant workers

Employers surveyed through our research identify that 83% of recent vacancies were filled by staff from the Outer Hebrides, with 15% from elsewhere in the UK and only 2% were from overseas. At the level of the total Outer Hebrides workforce overseas in-migrant positions would equate to around 240 workers. This figure is broadly in line with other estimates from Western Isles Enterprise and Northern Constabulary of the overseas migrant workforce.

Employers recruiting overseas workers have had to provide continuous support to help them to settle into local communities. This has involved sourcing housing and transport, translation services and changing the shift patterns to better suit the needs

of some workers. Employers identify that sourcing in-migrant workers is a costly and time-consuming process. However for most employers this was the only option available to them to sustain their business.

Most stakeholders now agree that in-migrant workers are necessary to sustain the local workforce and wider population. In-migrants from the UK also feel that more labour market opportunities have opened up as the requirement for Gaelic language in public sector agencies has been relaxed.

Graduate returners

There is considerable evidence that many graduates returning from the mainland are taking jobs that they are over-qualified for so that they can return to the Islands. This often starts out as a temporary measure when graduates first return, but many stay in these jobs once they become settled. Many returners identify that they will take any job on a temporary basis to help them to save up some money and pay off their debts.

This may have an impact on those who have lower level qualifications by raising the qualification levels of jobs that were previously accessible to school leavers or those with lower level qualifications. This is likely to further widen the opportunity gap between returners and stayers.

With some evidence of increasing numbers of younger people returning to the Islands after studying this could further increase the pool of graduates in the labour force.

5.2.2   Economic impacts of population change

Impacts on businesses

Employers are identifying mixed impacts on economic growth from population change although fewer answered this question than others. In terms of the employees covered by these employers, more than a third (37%) work for employers who are identifying positive impacts from population change; but these tend to be located in the Greater Stornoway area. In contrast, around 22% of employees appear to work in businesses experiencing negative impacts and most of these are in areas outside of Greater Stornoway. These current impacts mainly concern recruitment difficulties. And many more employers expressed concern at the likely future impacts of population change on recruitment.

Several stakeholders have highlighted the fact that in-migrant workers are keeping the fish processing sector going in the Outer Hebrides. They are also an essential part of the workforce in one bakery business in the Uists.

Figure 18 Percentage of employees in businesses which identified the current effects of population change
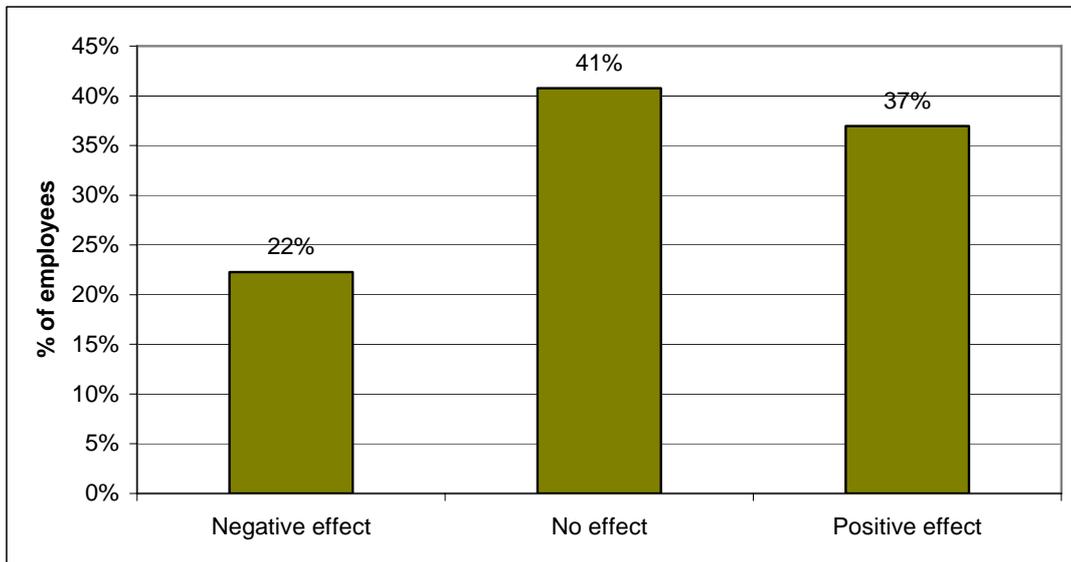
So

Source: Outer Hebrides Business Survey 2006 (n=41)

Figure 19 shows the importance of markets outside the Outer Hebrides for the turnover of Outer Hebrides businesses as well the turnover threatened by population change. Around 28% of turnover, or a little more than one pound in four generated by businesses, comes from businesses feeling the negative effects of population change.

Figure 19 Turnover affected by population change
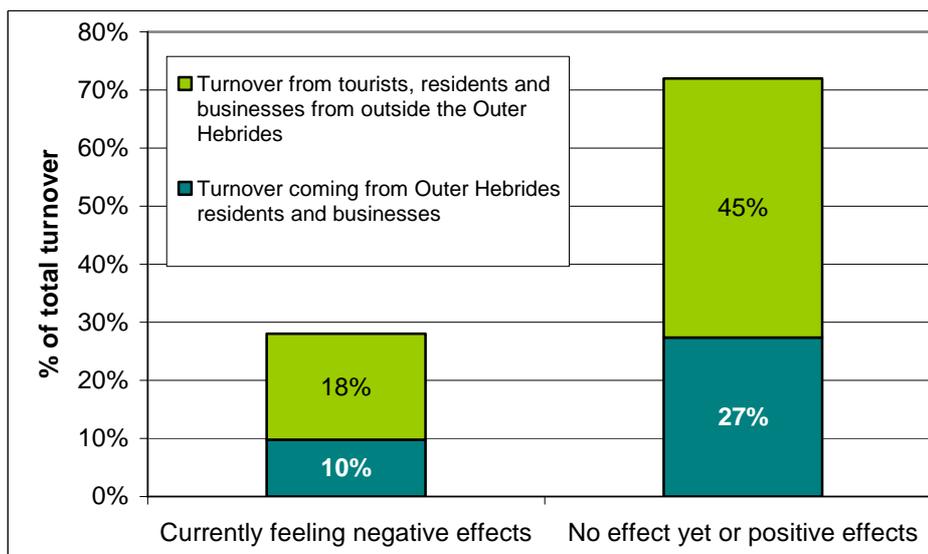
Source: Outer Hebrides Business Survey 2006 (n=41)

For these businesses feeling the negative effects now, they rely on off-island markets for around two thirds of their turnover. What this means for the economy is that around 30p in every valuable pound attracted to the Islands economy is under threat.

Businesses identifying population change as a concern employ around a fifth of the workforce surveyed, and have a higher turnover on average than those that envisage no problems. Businesses that appear to be most under threat from population and workforce changes are those that are more labour-intensive and rely on manual and semi-skilled workers such as hotels.

Housing and economic growth

The role of housing in supporting economic growth is important to recognise. For example in Balivanich several stakeholders believe that a strong supply of housing has supported economic growth and population sustainability. Benbecula has the highest rate of economic activity of any Island in the Outer Hebrides and has been more successful in retaining its female population. This is also likely to be linked to the investment in public services such as schools, the hospital and the data centre. The Local Housing Strategy highlights the interconnections between economic development and housing, identifying a role of increased housing supply both in smaller more remote communities and in the Greater Stornoway area.

Gross Value Added

According to the latest Scottish Executive Business Statistics the construction sector in the Outer Hebrides is one of the few sectors where GVA levels are on a par with the national level. As Figure 19 shows the GVA per employee in this sector was over £37,000 and moving closer to the national level.

Figure 20 Construction sector GVA per employee
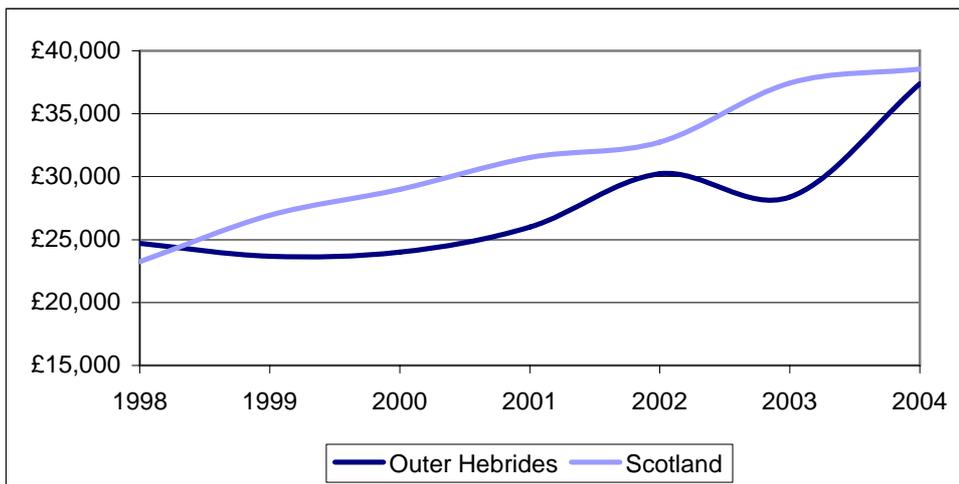
Source: Scottish Executive Business Statistics 2006

It is clear from Figure 21 that GVA per employee has continued to decline in manufacturing during 2003 and 2004. However construction sector GVA also showed an increase in 2004 as Figure 21 shows.

Figure 21 Outer Hebrides GVA per employee by sector

5.2.3   Social Impacts of population change

An ageing population

The out-migration of younger and more skilled people from the Outer Hebrides impacts on the social structure of communities that are left behind. The population in many remote parts of the Islands is increasingly older and this is being exacerbated by older in-migrants moving into these areas. Many older people have no immediate family around them to provide care and support, or to carry out traditional crofting jobs such as cutting peat. Older residents are often left isolated without access to a car and many rely on public transport to access local services.

Community imbalance

The impact of out-migration on the gender balance in many communities has been outlined earlier. One stakeholder has also highlighted that the out-migration of the more skilled members of the community means that the remaining population tends to have a higher level of literacy and numeracy needs.

In addition, in some rural communities there may be a tendency for 'dissenters to leave and 'conformists' to remain' (Jones 1999 p19). This tends to compound the cultural conservatism outlined earlier.

School rolls

Several stakeholders have identified the impact of declining school rolls on social development. While there are mixed views on this, many consider that one teacher schools do not offer children a broad enough social perspective and can hold back development.

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Community integration

Integration of in-migrants is also a key issue for developing sustainable communities. While the majority of in-migrants integrate into communities reasonably well there are clearly underlying problems and frictions among some native residents and in-migrants. Several focus group participants identify townships or areas where they feel English in-migrants are 'taking over'. This is associated with issues such as perceptions that properties are not being well maintained or kept tidy. There has also been some antagonism at the attitudes of in-migrants who question the way things are done on the Islands and expect things to change too quickly. And some in-migrants feel that they are viewed as foreign by some members of the indigenous community.

Conversely, research also suggests that some in-migrants are 'drawbridge' migrants who have little desire to engage with the community and want little or no change in the local area (Henderson and Shucksmith 1997).

There is some evidence that small numbers of in-migrants have left the islands after only a relatively short period of time (MacPherson 2005). This may represent only a small proportion of in-migrants. Generally, it has been found that in-migrants are satisfied with their decision (Hope et al 2003), and most new in-migrants do not intend to ever leave the Islands (MacPherson 2005).

Impacts on out-migrants

For some individuals, migration to an urban area can fail to address their needs and can even bring new problems. Out-migration may leave people vulnerable without the support of a network of family and friends, and difficulties have been reported including homesickness, poor health, financial trouble, homelessness and unemployment (Stockdale 2004, Jones 1992). In many cases migrants choose to persevere despite these disadvantages (Stockdale 2004).

5.2.4 Service provision impacts

The changing population patterns and characteristics of in-migrants will all impact upon the need for services. Recent changes have already required agencies to look at the way services are provided and the type and level of services. It is widely reported in the literature that rural services may be under threat due to reduced population levels (Stockdale 2004, Alston 2000, Bevan and Rhodes 2005, Communities Scotland 2005).

One important aspect of service provision in rural areas is that poor provision may affect some groups more than others, in particular the elderly and those who do not have access to transport (Shucksmith and Philip 2000).

We outline here some of the key impacts, both recent and predicted, of population changes in the Outer Hebrides.

Housing

As in many rural areas there is a widely identified demand for smaller and affordable housing to enable young people to move into the property market. This has been identified by stakeholders and young people who have moved back to the Islands. Projects such as the redevelopment of the Lewis Hotel into affordable housing, the

Sail Loft conversion and the Bridge project (providing Foyer-style and Student accommodation) are helping to provide a more diverse and flexible range of housing in central Stornoway, and improving the mix of activities and range of uses of the town centre, which previously had a predominantly commercial character. There is a significant affordable housing development programme in place in the greater Stornoway area, but most agree that more developments of this type are needed. The Comhairle also provides policy support for the use of housing in the upper floors of Stornoway town centre.

At the same time there is continuing strong demand for single self-build housing plots. The limitations of the construction sector and constraints due to sewerage capacity mean that there is a large number of houses waiting to be built. Demand is likely to continue to be focused around Stornoway and its surrounding communities, however there is also strong demand for housing identified by the number of planning applications on Harris.

Certain types of central government grants have had little impact in diversifying the housing supply. For example there was a relatively low take-up of Rural Home Ownership Grant self-build grants. Evidence suggests that this is because they only fund people to build a house large enough for their current household needs.

The loss of social rented housing stock through Right to Buy sales means that the number of houses becoming available is only slightly greater than the demand from people declaring themselves as homeless. This leads to misperceptions about the role of social housing. For example one focus group participant suggested that you had to be either pregnant or disabled to get a house.

The potential renewable energy developments on the Islands will require significant housing development to meet the needs of the workforce. Several stakeholders have raised the concern that lack of flexibility and capacity in the housing market may hold back economic growth.

There has been a noticeable decline in the demand for sheltered housing as older people are now being cared for in their own homes as much as possible.

Several parts of the Outer Hebrides have high rates of Second and Holiday Homes. Research into the impact of high levels of SAHH looked at Jura, Islay, and Colonsay as a case study. Residents there were sceptical of the economic contribution made by second homes, many of which lie empty for most of the year. Similarly, the impact on services and school roles was thought to be negative. By contrast, commercially let holiday homes were recognised as bringing economic advantages to rural areas.

Another interesting finding from this research was that a significant proportion of SAHH owners have strong connections to the local area, having either lived there in the past or having inherited the property from a family member. This is perhaps contrary to general perceptions. Indeed many second homes are owned by people from the Outer Hebrides who consider this to be their main home.

Education

Primary school provision is perhaps most directly affected by population changes. Between 1975 and 2005 the school rolls as a total have declined from 6,000 to 4,000 pupils – a drop of one third over that 30 year time period. There has also

been a lot of school rationalisation over the past 20 years with the number of schools reducing from 60 to 40 and there are plans for further rationalisation.

The changes in school rolls and populations vary across different islands and different communities. The introduction of new causeways linking the islands has not reversed the decline in areas such as Berneray, Scalpay and the north end of North Uist. In Berneray the school roll continued to drop despite the new causeway linking it to North Uist. Both the school on Berneray and the nearby Dunskeller school in Solas, North Uist closed 2 years later.

The Education Department reports that, despite some recent blips, overall school rolls on Harris and Barra are still falling much more quickly than elsewhere. However there have been growing schools rolls in Ness in the north end of Lewis and around Laxdale. This is due to inward migration and a lot of houses being built in these areas. The school in Laxdale was refurbished five years ago but already it is becoming too small for the increasing school roll in that area.

The education department has worked out that to keep secondary rolls from falling, primary rolls need to be 25% higher than secondary rolls overall. Currently the primary roll is 1,886 which is well below what it needs to be to sustain the secondary roll so the decline is likely to continue. In addition the current Primary 1 roll is 38% lower than the Primary 7 roll suggesting a continuing decline.

The dispersed nature of the population makes it very difficult to sustain school services. For example for 4,000 pupils in an urban area you might require 2 secondary schools and 4 primary schools, meaning 6 buildings and management teams. In the Islands however geography dictates the numbers and there are 40 schools. However it is likely that there will be further rationalisation.

Further and Higher Education

Lews Castle College is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Millennium project. However the small size of the College, which is about a tenth of the size of a mainland college, makes it difficult to effectively provide a broad range of FE and HE courses. The College has managed to maintain and increase student numbers despite the increasing numbers of young people leaving the Islands. It has done this by increasing the numbers of part-time and distance learning students. The number of full-time students has decreased.

The College sees its future role as developing specialist courses and graduate programmes as part of the UHI network. This will involve attracting back post-graduate students to carry out research in areas such as rural healthcare, renewable and alternative energy. There is currently a strong demand for summer graduate placements on the Greenspace Project. This is an energy research project which is exploring various potential opportunities for taking forward business ideas.

Health & community care

The increasing number of older people living in rural communities and often on their own has placed a heavy burden on community- based home care. The level of care being required and the dispersed nature of the population make it very costly to deliver the high standard of care that is needed. The problems around recruiting younger health-care workers are also likely to make this service more and more difficult to manage effectively.

More 'older people' are living longer and people are migrating into the Islands at older ages than previously. These trends have an impact on providing home-based health and community care. Where there are higher proportions of older people there are much higher incidences of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and other complex health problems associated with longevity. This means that the number and intensity of home visits has increased. The profile of care has also changed, previously it was task-centred but now there has been a switch to personal care that is tailored to meet individual needs. For example home care used to be once a day, now there may be as many as four or more visits in any one day. Over the last two years the social work service has overspent its budget in this area and this is likely to continue.

The elderly population is predicted to increase right up to 2015-16, and the continued pressure of shifting spend to maintaining people in their own homes will have a strain on budgets. Now for example the Comhairle and Health Board employ 12 people to provide a mobile overnight support service. While it would be cheaper to provide a residential service in Stornoway, this service creates local employment and allows people to stay in their own communities for longer. People's expectations of the level and nature of care have also increased over time.

Social services

One service impact that has recently emerged that is directly linked to in-migration has been the cost associated with dealing with children with emotional and behavioural problems. Several families have moved to the Outer Hebrides perhaps hoping a new start may help them to address these problems. The costs associated with providing specialist services are very high. Often suitable accommodation and treatment is only available on the mainland, and a small number of cases put a significant strain on the resources of the Social Work department, over and above the local caseload. These costs have impacts on overall budgets and in the longer term may have an impact on the provision of other social services.

Policing

In addition to the Headquarters in Stornoway there are two police officer stations at Tarbert in Harris and at Ness in Lewis. There are one-officer stations in Balallan, Barvas and Carloway on Lewis, Lochmaddy, Benbecula and Lochboisdale in the Uists and one on Barra. The ongoing decline in the populations in some of the smaller and more remote communities may lead to the closure of some of the 'one-man' police stations across the Outer Hebrides. Increasing competition for the limited budgets available and the need, for example, to make all police offices compliant with Disability Discrimination Act will put these stations under pressure.

Of the 48 current staff, 5 over the last 2 years have left their spouses behind on the mainland. There are issues of spouses being unable to find a job in some of these more remote communities which means that often they have to stay behind with jobs they already have. This in itself brings issues about the viability of providing police houses, for example there are 3 vacant police houses currently in Stornoway.

In terms of wider policing, there have been very few impacts from recent population changes. There have been a few minor drink-fuelled instances of anti-English racism but no problems with the Eastern European in-migrants. These issues are being tackled increasingly by a diversity group, which the police are involved with. This group is trying to increase the awareness among local communities of cultural diversity.

The only apparent issues arising from foreign nationals surround translation and transferability of documents such as driving licences and insurance policies.

Retail

The retail sector has been affected quite significantly by changes in technology. Some shops have adapted better than others to increasing competition with Internet shopping. However most interviewees and focus group participants identify high retail prices as a negative aspect of life in the Outer Hebrides. Several long-established shops have been forced to close, and many retailers have retired and their businesses not being sustained.

Almost all of the people we spoke to had made use of Internet shopping, and this had, in part, replaced the need for weekend shopping trips to Inverness or Glasgow. However many people were experiencing high delivery costs or finding that internet outlets do not deliver to the Outer Hebrides.

The local transport companies were identified as being particularly helpful in getting internet-purchased goods delivered to the Outer Hebrides, and the increasing demand for transporting these goods is likely to be one positive spin-off for the local economy.

Post offices

Post Offices have suffered a number of setbacks in addition to the problems posed by a falling population, including increased competition and changes to the benefits system. Sixty-two percent of rural Post Offices report reduced custom; a third of Postmasters are considering leaving the business (George Street Research 2005).

5.3 Chapter summary

By modelling current population trends we have developed a model to explore some of the likely implications of population change. This is based on 2004 population estimates, current birth rates and recent migration figures from GROS.

This model predicts population increasing to 2014 and then declining. Although it predicts a higher population in 2019 than in 2004, there will be fewer school age children, working age people and women of child-bearing age.

The projected drop of 23% in the number of women of child-bearing age is of most concern and would result in a significant decline in the number of births.

The projected population changes will have numerous linked social and economic impacts and will also affect service provision. The ageing population will have greater needs for health and social services while there will be fewer workers to provide them. In some communities the ageing population is being exacerbated by older people moving in.

There are acknowledged labour shortages in several employment sectors including professional posts in education and health, and in semi-skilled jobs in food production and hospitality.

Declining populations in some communities will threaten the viability of services such as schools, post offices and police stations. More than one in five businesses surveyed identify a negative effect on their business related to population change.

6 A sustainable population for the Outer Hebrides

This section looks at some of the key requirements for a sustainable population in the Outer Hebrides based on our assessment of the key drivers and their impacts. It also outlines some of the issues that policy should focus on to help achieve the desired population situation in 10 to 15 years.

6.1 A sustainable population in 10 to 15 years

Given the current population projections from our own and GROS models, outlined in the previous section it is clear that there is a need to identify ways to promote a more balanced population structure. The current prediction is for a 23% drop in the number of women of child-bearing age, which will lead to a drop in the annual number of births. This will have a continuing and longer-term impact on primary school rolls and the sustainability of some of the smaller and more remote communities in the Outer Hebrides.

A decline in the number of births will also make it more difficult to sustain specialist obstetric and paediatric services in the Outer Hebrides, threatening facilities and jobs.

While the overall size of the workforce is not of immediate concern, the average age of workers in the Outer Hebrides is set to increase significantly. There are also growing labour shortages in certain sectors: particularly among unskilled workers and among certain specialist professional jobs particularly in education, health and social work.

Our consultations and population research suggests that the overall size of the population is less important than achieving a healthier balance in terms of age and gender. Increasing the number of younger workers and women in the population will improve the balance of the community, help to reduce the average working age and contribute to natural population growth (by increasing the population of child-bearing age).

The focus for interventions should therefore be on:

o Retaining more young people in the local population;

o Increasing the number of younger women and couples in the population;

o Stabilising the number of primary school age children in the local population.

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6.2   The impacts of different approaches

Using the population model that we outlined in section 3 we have tested some different options in terms of population change to identify their potential impacts.

Figure 22 Impacts of different policy options

Option	Population at 2019	Change in child-bearing population	Number of annual births at 2019	Working age population - 2019	% population under 35	Primary school age population - 2019
Status quo	26,641	-22.9%	181	15,089	33%	1,808
Increase returners 25 – 34 by 20%	27,201	-18.5%	191	15,566	33%	1,846
Increase returners 25 to 44 by 20%	27,569	-17.5%	193	15,901	33%	1,864
Increase returners 25 – 34 by 40%	27,791	-13.8%	202	16,070	34%	1,885
Increase all in-migrant age groups under 45 by 20%	28,283	-13.6%	201	16,259	34%	2,022
Reduce out-migration by 20% among 16 to 24	27,254	-16.2%	196	15,587	34%	1,861
Increase returners/in-migrants by 40% (25-34) & reduce out-migration by 20% (16 to 24)	28,433	-6.8%	217	16,596	35%	1,937
Increase returners/in-migrants by 40% (25-44) & reduce out-migration by 33% (16 to 24)	**29,674**	**-1.1%**	**234**	**17,682**	**35%**	**2,012**

It is clear from the options outlined in Figure 22 that it will require radical changes in the numbers of in-migrants combined with reductions in out-migration to re-balance the population profile. Because of the impact of past change, the population will continue to show an ageing profile. However in order to stabilise the number of women of child-bearing age and the primary school roll, the model suggests the

need to increase in-migration among under 45s by 40% on 2004-05 levels and reduce out-migration among the 16 to 24 age group by a third. This suggests that the total population will need to increase to almost 30,000 before it starts to become sustainable in terms of the gender and age balance. The last option outlined suggests a population that has a growing number of women of child-bearing age and school-age children by 2017.

Figure 23 Age profile of different population options

Option	% Population under 16	% Working age	% Retirement age
Status quo	14%	57%	29%
Increase returners 25 – 34 by 20%	14%	57%	29%
Increase returners 25 to 44 by 20%	14%	58%	28%
Increase returners 25 – 34 by 40%	14%	58%	28%
Increase all in-migrant age groups under 45 by 20%	14%	58%	28%
Reduce out-migration by 20% among 16 to 24	14%	57%	29%
Increase returners/in-migrants by 40% (25-34) & reduce out-migration by 20% (16 to 24)	13%	59%	28%
Increase returners/in-migrants by 40% (25-44) & reduce out-migration by 33% (16 to 24)	**13%**	**60%**	**27%**

And as Figure 23 shows, the more radical option will have the biggest impact on increasing the proportion of people of working age. However the proportion of the population of retirement age will still increase, although not as much as in the other options outlined. The proportion of children in the population will decline under this option (despite an increase in actual numbers). However over time, the more sustainable structure of the population will lead to a longer-term increase in the proportion of children.

6.3 Key motivations within target groups

In order to focus interventions on the issues that are most likely to succeed in attracting people within the target population groups we have looked at the key

motivating factors within these groups. Clearly different groups identify different issues that will affect them at different stages of their lives. For example younger out-migrants are more likely to highlight 'raising a family' as a motivation for returning, but rank natural environment and sense of community as less important than other groups.

However the table below highlights the six factors that are collectively identified as most important by all groups.

Figure 24 Ranking of factors motivating a move (or potential move) to the Outer Hebrides

Group/ Factor	In-migrants	Leavers	Leavers aged 16 – 44 might return	Returners	Stayers
Safe environment	2	2	2	2	2
Close to family	N/A	3	4	1	1
Suitable work available	3	1	1	3	6
Natural environment	1	4	5	4	3
Raising a family	5	5	3	6	5
Sense of community	4	6	7	5	4

Where 1 = most important, etc.

It is clear that for those currently living away from the Islands, work is the most important factor. This compares to those who have never lived away from the Outer Hebrides who only rank work as the sixth most important factor in their choice to stay. For stayers and returners, family, community and a safe environment are key considerations. For in-migrants the natural environment is the most important factor that attracts them to the Outer Hebrides.

6.4 The sustainable approach

It is clear that attracting in-migrants among all younger age groups will have the most impact on all aspects of population sustainability including birth rates, school rolls and the workforce. This will mean attracting back out-migrants with families and/ or seeking to bring in in-migrants with families as well as single people and couples.

Clearly the quality of the natural environment and a continued safe environment are important factors. However these are issues that do not require any major policy interventions other than protecting existing assets.

To attract back younger households, providing suitable employment opportunities is the key challenge. However promoting policies and initiatives that provide services and facilities for younger children and young parents would perhaps also have a positive impact given that this group sees raising a family as a key motivation to return.

It also appears that reducing out-migration among the key age group of 16 to 24 will have a greater impact than increasing in-migration but will require a different emphasis. Again stayers tend to rank community and environment issues more highly than employment opportunities. However it is likely that policies that enable local people to pursue a wider range of work and study options locally would give more people who currently leave the option to stay.

Our research would therefore suggest that policy should focus on:

o   Attracting younger women of child-bearing age;

o   Attracting back graduates and younger workers; and

o   Retaining younger people and families with children.

To do this would require policies that focus on:

o   Widening employment opportunities for skilled workers, and particularly for women;

o   Providing a significantly greater number and range of vocational training opportunities and apprenticeships that will allow more young people to stay in the Outer Hebrides;

o   Providing housing options that are desirable, accessible and affordable to people in the early stages of their careers; and

o   Ensuring a quality range of social and leisure facilities that are attractive to women and younger children.

Underpinning all of these is the need to retain and market the environmental and quality of life assets that are one of the key attractions to in-migrants.

6.5   Chapter summary

Our consultations and population research suggests that the overall size of the population is less important than achieving a healthier balance in terms of age and gender. Increasing the number of younger workers and women in the population will improve the balance of the community, help to reduce the average working age and contribute to natural population growth (by increasing the population of child-bearing age).

Re-balancing the population profile will require radical changes in the numbers of in-migrants combined with reductions in out-migration. Because of the impact of past change, the population will continue to show an ageing profile. However in order to stabilise the number of women of child-bearing age and the primary school roll by 2019, the model suggests the need to increase in-migration among under 45s by 40% on 2004-05 levels and reduce out-migration among the 16 to 24 age group by a third.

The focus for interventions should therefore be on:

- o Retaining more young people in the local population;

- o Increasing the number of younger women and couples in the population;

- o Stabilising the number of primary school age children in the local population.

For those currently living away from the Islands, work is the most important factor. However those who have never lived away from the Outer Hebrides only rank work as the sixth most important factor in their choice to stay. Community, family and a safe environment are key considerations for stayers and returners. For in-migrants the natural environment is most important in attracting them to the Outer Hebrides.

So to achieve this would require policies that focus on:

- o Widening employment opportunities for skilled workers, and particularly for women;

- o Providing a greater number and range of vocational training opportunities and apprenticeships that will allow more young people to stay in the Outer Hebrides;

- o Providing housing options that are desirable, accessible and affordable to people in the early stages of their careers; and

- o Ensuring a quality range of social and leisure facilities that are attractive to women and younger children.

Underpinning all of these is the need to retain and market the environmental and quality of life assets that are one of the key attractions to in-migrants.

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7 Real life experiences

This section outlines some of the key characteristics, experiences and motivations of the different groups covered in the research. It is based on an extensive online survey of current and past residents of the Outer Hebrides and a series of focus groups across the Outer Hebrides and with Hebrideans living on the mainland. It particularly focuses on the needs of those who have left the Islands and may consider returning, and the experiences of in-migrants who have moved to the Islands for work or for a better quality of life.

7.1 Characteristics of stayers, out-migrants, in-migrants and returners

7.1.1 Personal characteristics

As Figure 25 shows the age characteristics of the different groups varies, with out-migrants having the highest proportion of younger age groups. More than two thirds of those surveyed in this group were aged under 35. This is perhaps to be expected given that most have left the Islands to access education. Returners, while showing a slightly older age profile than out-migrants, are twice as likely to be aged below 35 (44%) than in-migrants (20%). There was a higher proportion of under 25 year olds among stayers than the other groups (24%). However it is likely that some of this group have not yet left to go to University and are therefore likely to join the ranks of the out-migrants.

Figure 25 Age profile of different groups
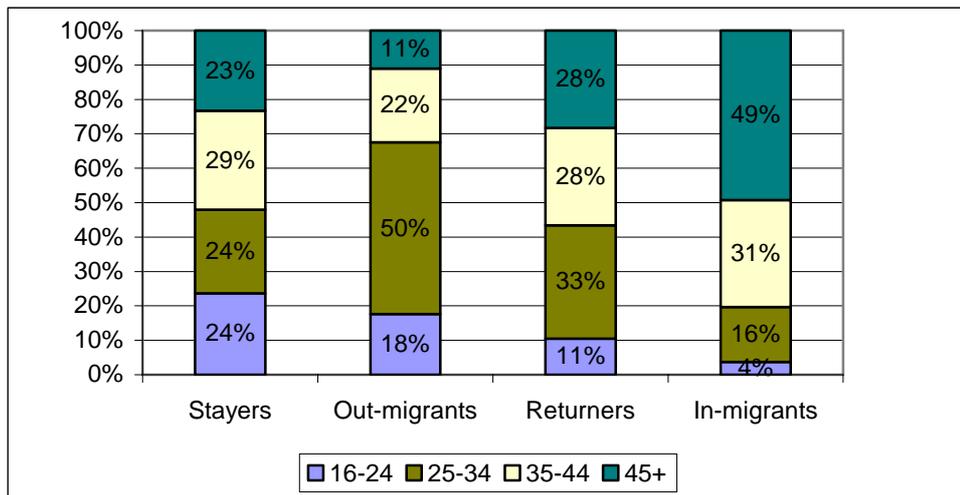
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=1,387)

As Figure 26 shows, from our survey stayers appeared more likely to be single and without children and are less likely to own their home than the other Outer Hebrides-based groups (returners and In-migrants). However this may reflect their younger age profile as outlined earlier. Out-migrant respondents also appeared to have similar characteristics in these respects. They had lower rates of dependents and were more likely to be single.

Figure 26 Personal characteristics of respondents
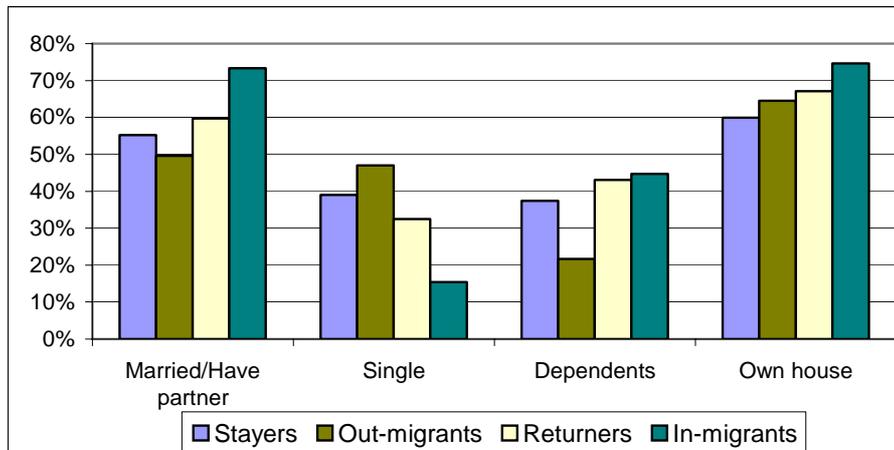
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=1,387)

7.1.2   Qualifications

Jones and Jamieson (1997) suggested that there is a 'stereotype that achievers leave and the rest stay'. There is some evidence for this in our survey. Stayers were more likely to have qualifications below degree level such as HND, SVQs and Standard Grades.   But some one in eight (12%) held a degree. This points to a substantial number of stayers pursuing what qualifications they can locally, somewhat undermining the stereotype.

Figure 27 Highest level of qualifications by status

Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=1,387)

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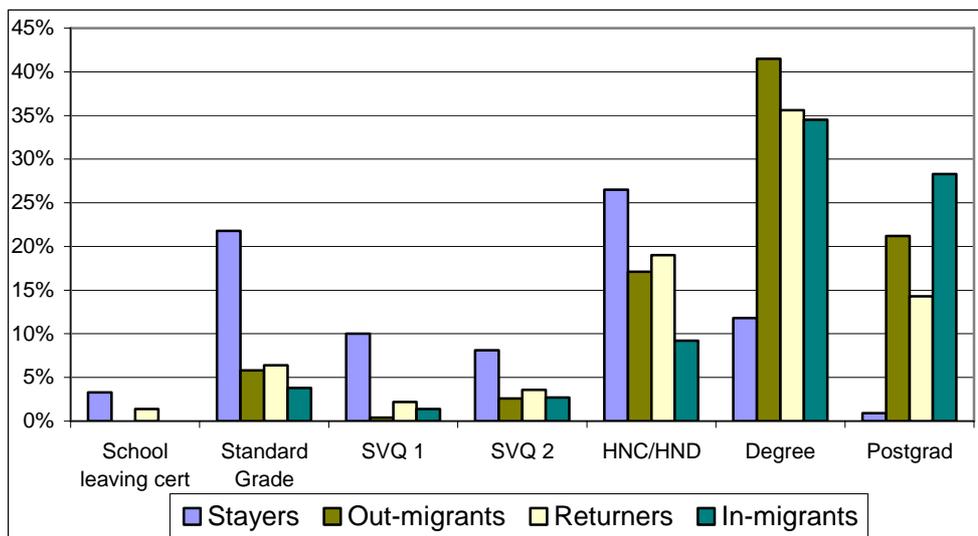
7.1.3 Careers

The occupational profile of stayer respondents was very different to the other groups – with administration and secretarial occupations dominating rather than management and professional jobs. They are half as likely as returners to be managers or professional and twice as likely to work in administrative jobs. This perhaps reflects the structure of the economy and also the local availability of qualifications in the Outer Hebrides.

Figure 28 Occupations by status
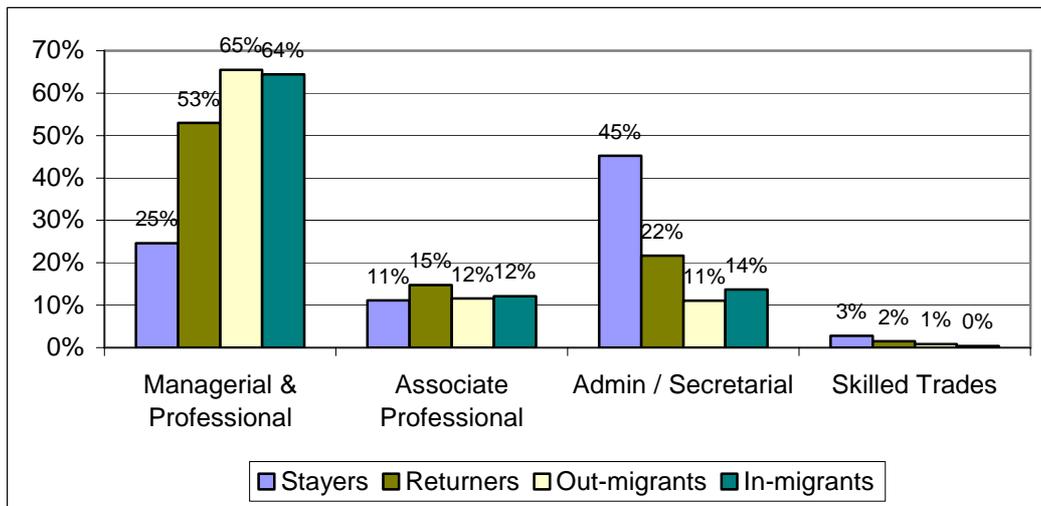
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=1,146)

As Figure 29 shows there was twice the rate of self employment among in-migrants. However the rates of self employment for stayers were the same as for returners, despite the major differences in qualifications and occupational structure.

Figure 29 Rates of self employment
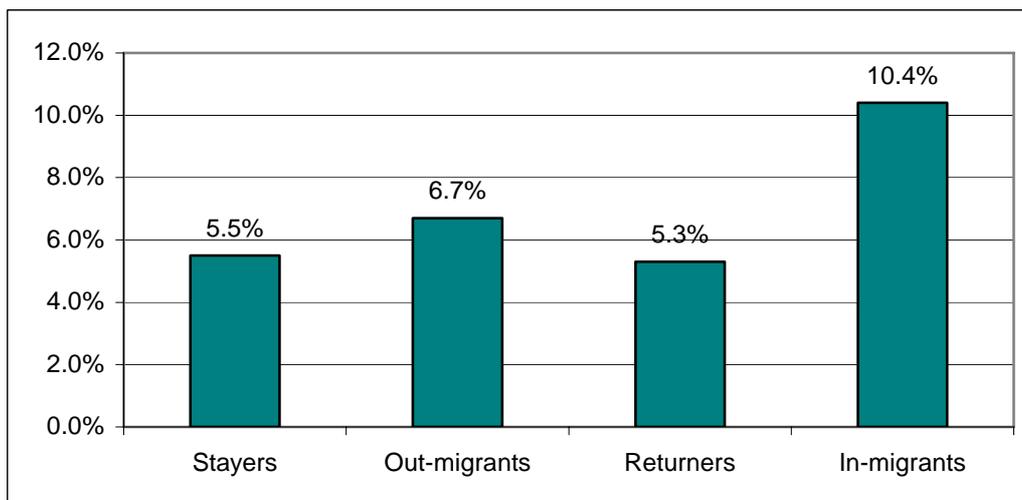
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=1,365)

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In terms of sectors that people become self-employed in, construction is most common among self employed stayers. The clear demand for construction work and provision of local construction training support those wishing to pursue these options.

7.2   Stayers' motivations and experiences

This section assesses the motivations and experiences of stayers through our survey, interviews with Lews Castle College students and a focus group in Harris.

7.2.1   Stayers: decisions about staying

The majority (60%) of stayers have considered leaving at some stage. Around a third (18%) of these have not made up their minds about whether to leave or stay. One in fourteen stayers (7%) see themselves leaving within the next five years.

Motivations to stay appear closely related to family and quality of life. In the survey, the most influential factors in helping individuals in their decision to stay were:

o   Being able to be close to family;

o   A safe environment;

o   Natural environment; and

o   A sense of community.

These were significant issues in the focus groups although the Lews Castle College students also highlighted that the cost of moving and living away was a significant factor in their decision to stay and study at the College.

7.2.2   Stayers: work and career

In our survey, among those who were or are considering leaving, the ability to obtain suitable work was clearly the most influential factor. A constant theme from the focus groups was that the choice of work as well as the pay was poor. Participants in our focus groups in Lewis and Harris highlighted that there was an array of poorly paid jobs available locally.

Progression in terms of skills was also highlighted with *some skills easier to train for on the island than others.* Stayers in Harris had positive attitudes to entrepreneurialism but none expressed a desire to start their own business. They (and people they knew) had identified opportunities for businesses but had not been enable to get these off the ground. Likewise one former Lews Castle College Student would consider starting their own business but did not know how to do this.

There is also a perception among some stayers that they are losing out to those who left the Islands to study. One former Lews Castle student with a good degree had applied for jobs but felt that students with the same qualifications from a mainland university had been favoured for the post. She is now working in lower level jobs.

7.2.3   Stayers: views on transport

Getting people and goods on and off island was seen generally as expensive and difficult. One focus group participant highlighted that *a family holiday to Cyprus may cost £400 but the flights to Glasgow for four people could cost £600.*

Participants criticised the price of petrol as many Outer Hebrides residents have no option but to drive most places. This is identified as a barrier to pursuing job opportunities. Jones (1992) highlighted that the cost of accessing transport in remote areas may exclude less affluent individuals from accessing the widest range of employment opportunities.

They also highlighted that companies can charge what they want in terms of delivery for internet shopping. But participants praised the local haulage company who they described as having really good standards and being very helpful and reasonable.

The issue of restricted Sunday transport was contentious. However most stayers in the focus groups broadly support the current situation. They identified that people can get off the Islands on Sunday if they really want to. Also one participant believed that if there are no transport services on Sunday in the Northern Isles then tourists would have to stay a day longer, although there was no evidence of this happening in practice.

Qualitative feedback from stayers in the survey illustrated that there are widely opposing viewpoints with several supporting a Sunday ferry as allowing weekend visits to family and friends on the mainland without affecting work.

7.2.4   Stayers: views on housing

The cost of housing was a significant issue among stayers with Harris focus group participants highlighting the perception that:

Houses appear to be going for £200,000 and they are only shells of houses.

Even for those with land, respondents highlighted that contractors are charging a lot of money for new builds.

Another stayer identified the difficulty of getting onto the housing ladder:

'A lot of people my age want to buy flats/houses rather than renting - that way they have security in the place they were born and brought up - this is made too difficult and unaffordable due to incomers boosting up the house prices. Locals get fed up with this and move to the mainland to buy a home there.'

7.2.5   Stayers: views on service quality

Stayers highlighted that local shopping provision is limited in range and quality but Internet shopping has made life much easier. However trips to the mainland were still seen as necessary for a 'proper shopping' experience.

Stayers in Stornoway saw An Lanntair as a welcome addition to the town. Some stayer responses in the survey identified the local pubs as *the only place to go for socialising.* Facilities for young people were seen as poor in Harris.

Stayers in areas peripheral to Stornoway highlighted what they saw as an unevenness in public service investment – such as the lack of facilities compared to Stornoway or the lack of investment compared to Stornoway.

7.2.6 Stayers: views on community life

Several stayers voiced negative perceptions of local attitudes. Some respondents to our survey had a desire to move away because they wanted *less judgement of personal values* and that they were *fed up of the attitudes.* However there were strongly contrasting views on the community from very positive to very negative. Positive features included people looking out for their neighbours and communities rallying round during illness or bereavement.

Research elsewhere supports this sharply contrasting viewpoint. Our research supports the view that those who stay are more likely to accept these aspects of community life in the Outer Hebrides and learn to live with them. However there is a clear age component to these attitudes with younger adults more likely to become frustrated with some aspects of community life.

7.3 Leavers' motivations and experiences

Our research with out-migrants is based on online survey responses, two focus group with out-migrants in Glasgow and Aberdeen and a focus group with summer students at the Greenspace Research Project at Lews Castle College.

7.3.1 Leavers: motivations to leave

Education and job opportunities

In our survey, around 80% of leavers left before they were 26 (50% when they were 17 or 18, and a further 30% aged 19 to 25). Out-migrants in Glasgow highlighted that there is also perhaps a 'conditioning' or 'expectation' to go to university. It was also highlighted that there was pressure (from teachers and parents but also not to be left behind) to go to university and some students are simply not "up to it" (the challenges, finance etc) and this explained some of the 'Christmas drop-outs'. There are indications also that young people from the Outer Hebrides pursuing higher education on the mainland will group together for support and choose universities because that is where their friends are going or where their siblings already are.

Figure 30 highlights the significance of work and education in why people left and the following response is a typical illustration:

'When I initially left it was because I couldn't see any career opportunities within the Western Isles that were attractive to me. I left mainly for higher education purposes, getting a good honours degree has meant that now I work as a senior IT manager.'

This is a typical story of the most frequent type of leaver – those that leave for higher education and work. For many parts of rural Scotland, education has been recognised as a key driver of out-migration, affecting the younger age groups in particular (Stockdale 2004; Jones and Jamieson 1997).

Out-migrants in Glasgow highlighted that there is also perhaps a 'conditioning' or 'expectation' to go to university. It was also highlighted that there was pressure (from teachers and parents but also not to be left behind) to go to university and some students are simply not "up to it" (the challenges, finance etc) and this explained some of the 'Christmas drop-outs'. There are indications also that young people from the Outer Hebrides pursuing higher education on the mainland will group together for support and choose universities because that is where their friends are going or where their siblings already are.

Figure 30 Motivations for leaving
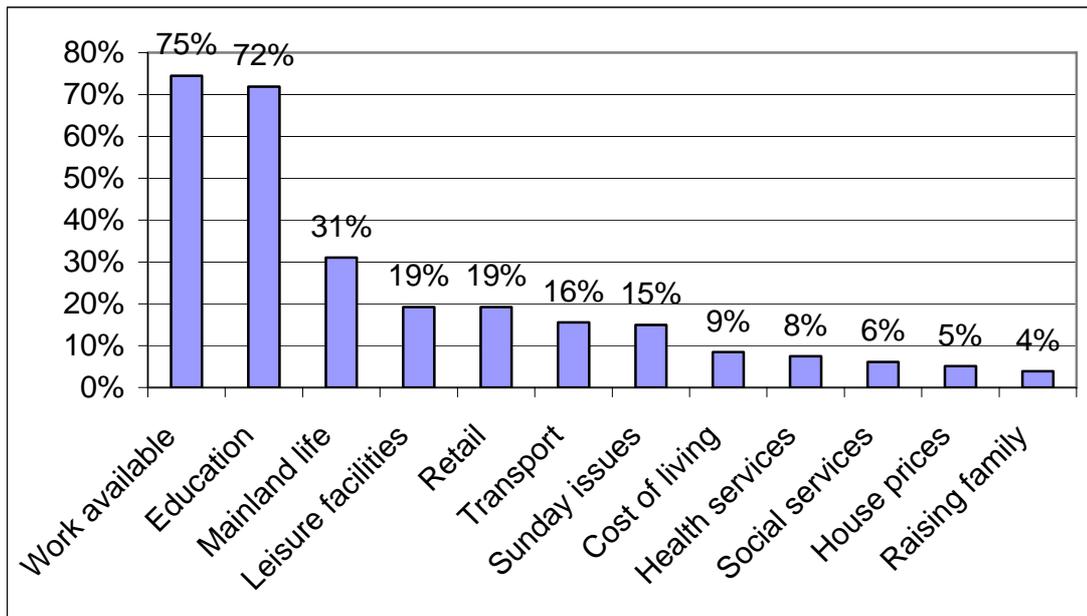
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=466)

Opportunities for women

Some respondents highlighted that a change in their partners' career had dictated their move to the mainland. This was usually the male partner who had perhaps been offered a position on the mainland. However opportunities for women are often seen to be limited on the Islands, with one male participant leaving Lewis to give his partner better opportunities:

From 1990 - 2004 I have worked on a rotational basis offshore. The initial reason for leaving Lewis was to give my partner an opportunity to obtain more fulfilling employment. She had been educated to degree level, but could only find a junior administrative position within a local Stornoway company; so we moved to Aberdeen in 2001.

New experiences

The desire for new experiences appears important with individuals wanting to explore life beyond the Outer Hebrides. Those joining the Merchant Navy or working offshore highlighted this as a key reason. But others also cited this: - '*Broadening of horizons was probably the single most important thing*' or '*to see and experience another way of life.*'

7.3.2 Leavers: perceptions of Outer Hebrides life

Outside of work, education, relationship ties and the desire to find and experience new challenges and places, some respondents focused on what they saw as negative aspects of Island life. This included a lack of things to do or restricted travel but more commonly social aspects such as a goldfish bowl existence or claustrophobic community.

7.3.3 Leavers: views on Jobs and career

Leavers' perceptions of jobs and careers on the islands included:

o   People being over-qualified for the work they are doing;

o   Many menial and low paid jobs with little prospect of progression;

o   Varying levels of support for enterprise; and

o   Public sector jobs going to people with connections.

There were few positive views on the nature and conditions of the jobs available in the Outer Hebrides. Aberdeen focus group participants described the available jobs as *menial* and *dead-end*. The group drew on their own experiences of having worked in the Outer Hebrides for some time in their adulthood. They highlighted that they would like to have stayed but felt they had little choice in the matter.

One leaver had tried hard to secure work in the Outer Hebrides but had not succeeded:

'I left the island for the simple reason that I could not obtain employment. I would dearly have loved to remain on the island but could not even get interviews for jobs let alone work. I have gone for two jobs on the mainland and been successful on both occasions and in obtaining both of these jobs, I succeeded over a large number of other applicants.'

Aberdeen participants knew several people working in the Outer Hebrides who were unhappy in their jobs and complained of being *stuck* career-wise. Underemployment in skills terms appeared to be an issue with many people taking jobs that they are over-qualified to do. There were also examples given of ambitious workers *hitting a glass ceiling*. It was highlighted that *you either have to lower your expectations or have them dashed completely.*

7.3.4 Leavers: views on enterprise support

The Glasgow focus group focused more on the performance of the agencies that supported enterprise development. There was some praise for the Council and the Enterprise Company and their standards of advice as well as the local banks. However, a participant from the Uists perceived a lack of support and investment from the Enterprise Company in that area.

Aberdeen participants felt that the attitude of the agencies can be quite negative and overpowering towards tentative entrepreneurs with *good ideas strangled at birth.* The perceived immediate demand for concrete plans and documents could put people off.   The group felt that the overlap between business people and the

enterprise network was perhaps too close and that the enterprise network worked in the interest of existing companies and to maintain the status quo.

Exacerbating all these perceived barriers was what the Aberdeen group called the *Hebridean fear of failure* where *dynamic individuals can get slapped down.*

7.3.5   Leavers: views on economic development opportunities

The Aberdeen group was divided over the merits of the proposed wind farms. The group concluded that if wind farms were community owned or offshore that would be better. The point was made that wind farms that directly benefited the community (as in Denmark) would be more acceptable. The risk would be that all the profit and benefits would go off-island. They also identified a demonstrator offshore project in the Moray Firth that will be useful to look at. The Glasgow group felt there is a danger of having no value added to the local community.

A participant from the Uists felt that the enterprise company does not do a good enough job for the Southern Isles. He highlighted the unused business space in Daliburgh as well as the un-tapped potential of the Tom Morris designed golf course at Askernish. He felt the investment *always goes to the North not the South.* There was some agreement that the political know how for obtaining funding and making the case for funding is concentrated in Stornoway and Lewis.

Community buy-outs were seen as highly successful and a major contributory factor in the vibrancy of Harris.

7.3.6   Leavers: views on housing

There was a wide range of views on housing in the Outer Hebrides with out-migrants well aware of the price increases and pressures. Their awareness of what is happening comes largely from friends and family, some of whom were working in the construction trade. The feelings were:

o   In-migrants are driving up house prices; and

o   *You're stuck if you don't have access to land.*

One Aberdeen participant had friends on Harris who commented on the rising house prices and the fact that locals were increasingly priced out by in-migrants buying houses.

7.3.7   Leavers: views on transport

Across the three focus groups, two common themes emerged among out-migrants:

o   The cost in time and money to get on and off islands was seen as prohibitive; and

o   The need for a compromise on the issue of Sunday sailings.

The expense of going home for a visit with a car was seen as more expensive *than a holiday in Portugal.*

Aberdeen participants felt that the Eastern Airways flight was useful but wrongly scheduled with it being too early for oil workers to take advantage of. Instead oil

workers are taking the *awful* A96 to Inverness to catch a flight to Stornoway. This was seen as a significant factor in why the flight is not fully booked all the time.

In the Glasgow group, a participant originally from South Uist felt it was: *a massive journey from the central belt to Stornoway by car but if they brought back the Mallaig to Lochboisdale ferry, this would open up the islands more to the central belt.*

Overall, anything which made visiting home easier and cheaper would mean more trips home. The Glasgow group felt that the seven day connection was needed. The Aberdeen group felt there should be at least one sailing on Sunday and how even a change in the timing of the last ferry on Saturday would make a huge difference to some people who find this constraining. The last ferry currently leaves at 5pm on a Saturday.

With transport in the Outer Hebrides, the price of fuel was seen as limiting the ability to commute. Buses provided good services around the 9-5 working day but outside this time, the services were less good.

7.3.8   Leavers: views on services and facilities

Participants were not happy about school closures. A participant originally from Back felt that closing the secondary school there could be detrimental to young people with the first two years of secondary schooling recognised as being important. A participant originally from South Uist criticised the closures there and felt that once they were closed, they were never going to be re-opened.

The cost of goods was compared negatively to that on the mainland with *what would buy you two weeks shopping in Glasgow would only buy you a week in Stornoway.*

In terms of care services, there was some criticism of the NHS management. In-migrants were also identified as key users of social work services in certain parts of rural Lewis.

Teenage life was seen as rather boring and likely to encourage alcohol abuse. One young leaver felt there was *pressure on young people once they turned 13 or 14 to get very drunk.*

7.3.9   Leavers: views on community life

It was felt that the Hebrides are a good place if you like the outdoors and that the overall standard of living is much better than the mainland. It was felt that Stornoway had a good reputation for eating out. The arts centre 'An Lanntair' had created a lot more civic pride and that in fact it is a better town in terms of facilities than similarly sized towns like Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Lerwick. They highlighted that things like An Lanntair as an improvement to what life was like in Stornoway. However a participant originally from South Uist felt that places like Daliburgh are now *dead* and could not see what attracts tourists to the Uists.

One Glasgow participant felt the Presbyterian religion is still exerting an 'ideological oppression' in a small gated community. However positive aspects of a close-knit community were highlighted such as the ability to go 'visiting' unplanned and on weekday evenings. Other positives included how neighbours *check up on you to see if you're okay.*

7.4 Leavers: openness to returning

Around a quarter of out-migrants are currently either making plans (5%), or have fairly clear plans to return when they are older (21%). A similar proportion state that it will never happen or is unlikely (27%). However around half stated that they had not thought about it or were considering options (27% and 20% respectively). (Figure 31).

Across the focus groups, for those considering moving back, there was willingness to compromise somewhat. A husband and wife in the Aberdeen group felt: *We would take a pay cut to move home but not too substantive a pay cut. To move back you would have to accept a pay cut and sacrifice the level and quality of job.*

Figure 31 Leavers' openness to returning
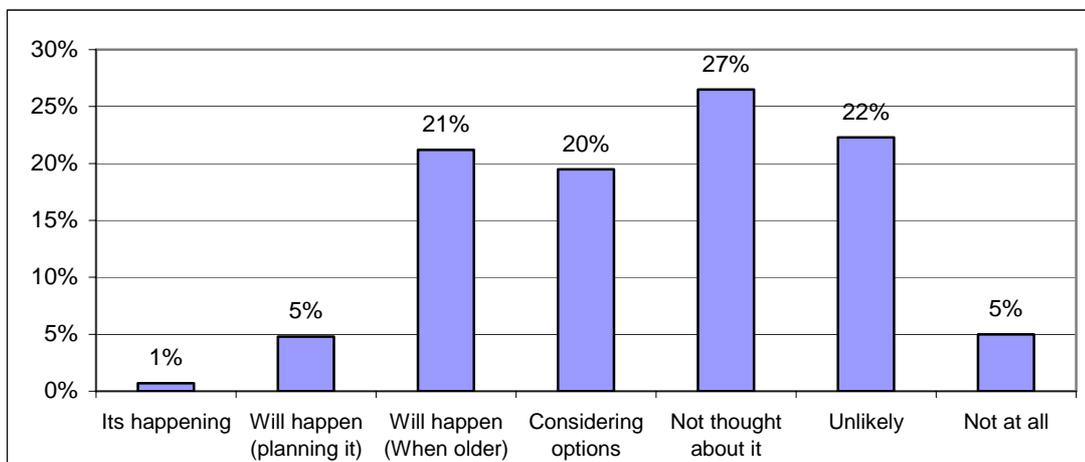
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=466)

7.5 Lifestyle in-migrants' motivations and experiences

This section looks at the experiences of those who have moved from the mainland and elsewhere to live in the Outer Hebrides. It is based on a series of focus groups held in Lewis, Benbecula and Barra, and on findings from our internet survey.

7.5.1 Lifestyle versus work as motivation

For most in-migrants there are several inter-related motivations behind their decision to locate in the Outer Hebrides. From our literature review and stakeholder interviews it is clear that there are distinctions between those who principally move because of quality of life reasons and those whose key motivation is employment or economic related. However as Figure 32 shows, even many of those whose main motivations are lifestyle related also identify that work is an important factor.

The vast majority of the in-migrants responding to our survey were motivated to a significant extent by quality of life issues. We have looked at lifestyle in-migrants separately as they have different characteristics and motivations from those whose motivation is essentially economic.

Figure 32 Scale of lifestyle and work motivations

Lifestyle was important, work was not

All in-migrants

Work and lifestyle were important

Work was important, lifestyle was not

Neither work nor lifestyle were important (other factors)
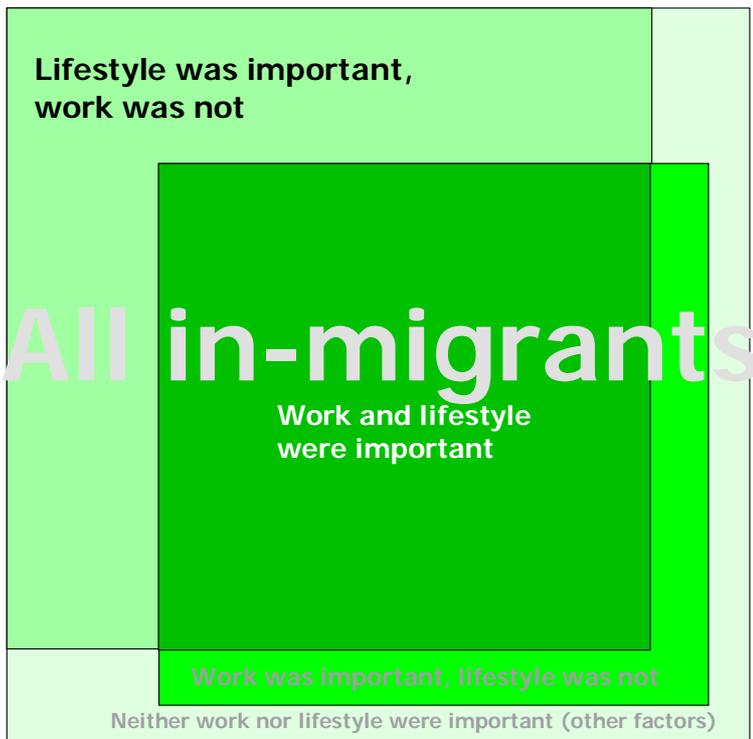
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=297)

As Figure 33 shows, lifestyle in-migrants are more likely to come from further a field, and the further away migrants come from the more likely they are to be motivated by lifestyle reasons; such as quality of life, environment and access to countryside.

Figure 33 Key motivations of in-migrants by origin
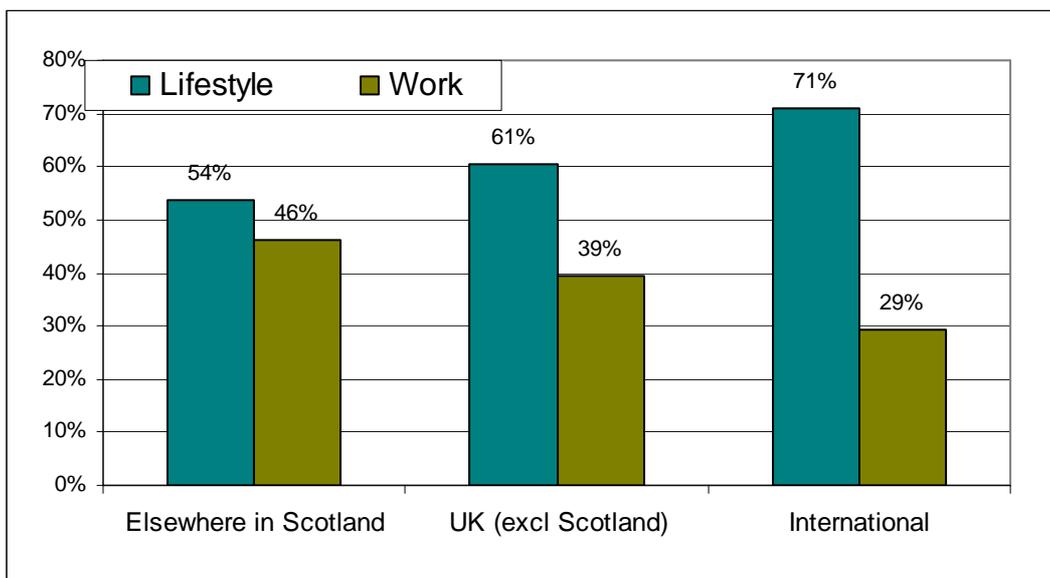
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=297)

7.6 Lifestyle in-migrants: motivations to move to the Outer Hebrides

From our survey it is clear that the environment and other of quality of life issues are very important to in-migrants. It is clear from Figure 34 that the natural environment is the biggest single factor identified as very important. This contrasts with returners (who rank this as only fourth) and out-migrants (who rank it as fifth in terms of factors that would prompt a return). Work is also identified as important, but only by just over half of in-migrants surveyed. A safe environment is also identified as very important by just over half of those in our survey.

Figure 34 Motivating factors identified as very important by in-migrants
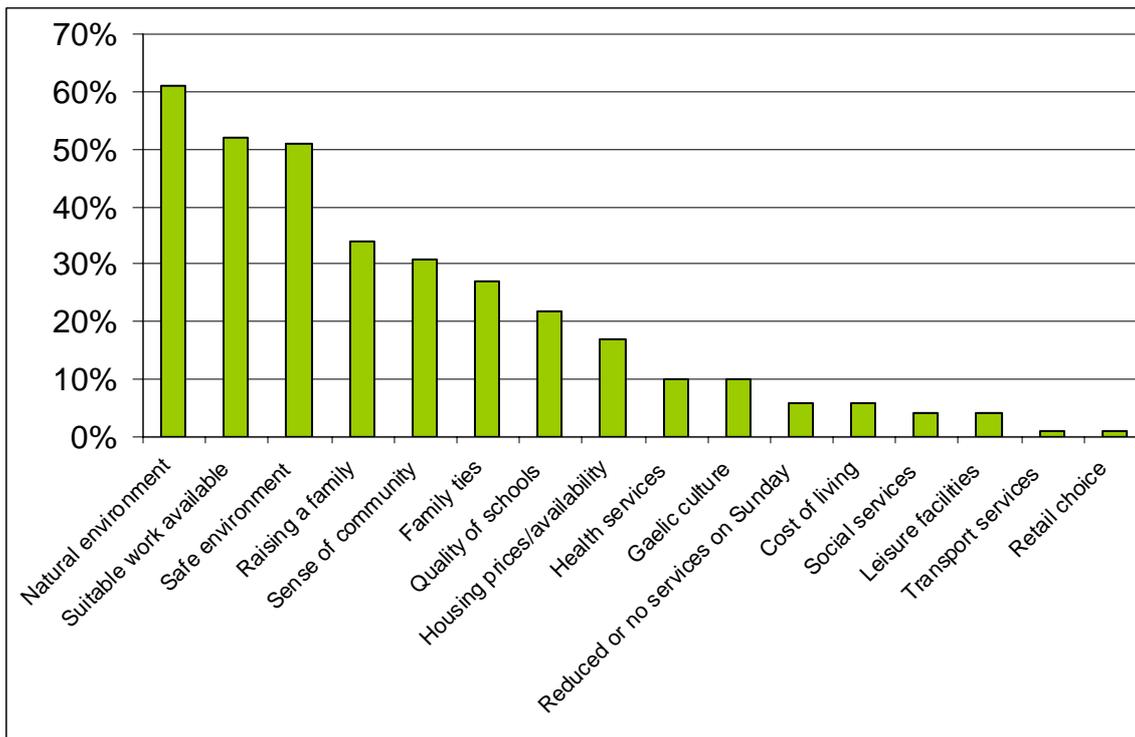
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (n=297)

Most of the participants who had younger children identified family reasons for migrating to the Outer Hebrides; there was a desire to bring them up in a safe and child-friendly environment.   Around a third of survey respondents identified that raising a family was a key motivation. The timing of the move was partly made dependent on the developmental stage of the children (e.g. pre-school). For returners, family reasons tended to be a pull factor to the island (for example, they were often keen to move closer to their parents and siblings, or other family members).

One main distinguishing feature between the in-migrants and returners was that in-migrants often highlighted the landscape and items associated with remote rural life which attracted them, while returners tended to stress family ties, such as (ageing) parents and siblings. Some describe the "freshness of the whole place", and the clean air. However, the landscape could also be seen as a double-edged sword, breathtaking and bleak at the same time, very boring sometimes, and thrilling in another moment.

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In Barra, two focus group participants had parents who had left the island to look for a better life in urban Scotland. However, the continued family connection with Barra and the many holidays spent there had had such a profound effect on the two individuals that they felt they had 'returned home'. Despite their upbringing in urban Scotland they had been well immersed in Highland culture throughout, and had always identified with it. Both commented that there were many people in their situation in Barra, and with the same outlook.

Several in-migrants had originally become acquainted with the Outer Hebrides through holidays, in which the Isles had left a lasting impression. This was followed by the wish to return the subsequent year, and eventually to move there.

A different situation applied to other in-migrants with no family history in the Outer Hebrides. Family events, such as the death of a parent, a divorce, or a move to other parts of the UK by a sibling, were taken as the cause to leave home, and to look for a new life elsewhere.

7.6.1 Lifestyle in-migrants: views on jobs and careers

In most cases, employment opportunities were the main prerequisite to enable a move to the Outer Hebrides. However, in one case, the desire to move from Glasgow to Lewis with a family of young children was so great that the family decided to first set the date for the relocation, and only then focus on the job search.

Most in-migrants explained that they had experienced a salary reduction (and often a career demotion) when they moved. However they had balanced this negative aspect with the better quality of life they were expecting to find, and had found, in the Outer Hebrides. Indeed, in several instances, individuals indicated that they had suffered from their previous stressful job, and had felt unhappy in their post. Only a very small minority of participants reported that their move to the Outer Hebrides coincided with, or was prompted by, better career prospects and a higher salary.

In Lewis, there was a sense that employment opportunities had actually improved over the last five years - in part due to broadband initiatives. There were also reports by three participants that professional jobs which had recently been advertised at their workplace had been difficult to fill, and had neither received responses from Hebrideans, nor from other Scottish people. Difficulties in recruitment may have been explained why jobs in the social services were given to non-Gaelic speakers, despite the Comhairle Gaelic policy aiming to cater for their Gaelic speaking clients. Participants identified a lack of support for non-Gaelic employees to learn Gaelic, for example, through classes provided at different ability levels for employees.

Some issues were also raised that caused some level of concern especially in Barra. For example, it was felt that any Comhairle job that pays well will very rarely go to Barra, but rather stay in Stornoway or Balivanich. Barra participants felt that improved broadband provision could attract high quality jobs to the island. However, they also thought that businesses were not as well supported on the island as on the mainland.

In terms of business development, the Comhairle was rated as one of the better organisations supporting new businesses. In Barra, participants reported disappointing experiences with Western Isles Enterprise, in which the organisation was deemed to take far too long to process application forms. Participants also thought WIE was too judgemental and had little understanding of what communities

need. It was felt the agency was pushing their own agenda, and expecting applicants to adhere to it, as well as treating applicants in a top-down fashion rather than as clients.

7.6.2 Lifestyle in-migrants: views on transport

Independent from the Sunday ferry service issue, public transport, and the costs of travelling between the islands and the mainland were viewed critically by participants. Expensive fares prevented Outer Hebrides residents from leaving the islands and connecting with family on the mainland, as well as discouraging friends and family on the mainland from visiting the Outer Hebrides. Interestingly, two participants also saw positive aspects here, for example, arguing that the high fares had kept people away that were not desperate to come, thereby conferring to the islands some kind of exclusivity. High fuel costs (over 10% higher than in urban Scotland) were also highlighted as an issue.

The time it took to complete journeys was also mentioned as a drawback in particular in relation to flight schedules. For example, it is not possible to attend a meeting in Edinburgh leaving from Stornoway without an overnight stay. In Barra participants could access cheaper flight fares if they were flexible about timings.

While bus services in Barra were also seen as quite satisfactory before 5pm, they stopped after this time. This ruled out public transport as an option for individuals commuting to and from work.

7.6.3 Lifestyle in-migrants: views on healthcare

One in-migrant to the South Uist area was able to register with an NHS dentist immediately, and felt pleasantly surprised about this. This positive experience was shared by residents in Barra. But an in-migrant reported on the difficulties he had encountered when trying to register with an NHS dentist in the Stornoway area. He was told he was the 4000th on the waiting list, and so turned to private provision.

Barra participants highlighted health care provision as an issue with several professional health care posts not being replaced. This included the loss of a psychiatric nurse; a physiotherapist; an occupational therapist; and an educational psychologist who used to come to the school. Moreover, the air ambulance had been replaced with a helicopter. This was a particular cause for concern because it could only take the patient, but no next of kin. And the helicopter could take over two hours to arrive, which again in cases of serious illness could prove too much of a delay.

In contrast one out-migrant originally from Harris, whose parents are in-migrants, felt there was a really good health service. They identified that *they're fantastic, they look after my dad, they fly him to Edinburgh, accompany him and there's no way we will get that kind of service on the mainland*'.

7.6.4 Lifestyle in-migrant: views on services for young people

While the Outer Hebrides were regarded a good place for elderly people, and a good place for the very young, it was not necessarily considered a good place to be in-between these stages. Parents of older teenagers in Lewis expressed their concern that facilities needed to be available for this age group, for example, bowling alleys,

swimming and cinemas. The group discussed that some facilities may not be worthwhile commercially if they were not able to open on Sundays. The parents also indicated that if their children were to leave the Outer Hebrides with little prospect of returning, the whole family was likely to leave.

They had been disappointed about experiences around youth events in the past, for example, a concert with teenage bands, which had been organised by young people. It was explained that adults interfered with complaints about the noise from relatively early evening hours.

The focus group participants in Benbecula suggested that while there were plenty of outdoors opportunities, in terms of sports facilities, a case could be made for improving the poor standard of football pitches in the area, and for a covered sports centre, especially given the promising athletics club in North Uist.

7.6.5 Lifestyle in-migrants: views on other local services

Educational services in Stornoway were also rated highly, for example, the fact that there is always a Gaelic course on somewhere (for free). Participants in the Stornoway area who had attended courses or studied for degrees at Lews Castle College talked very positively about this experience, and the College was rated a big asset for the area.

In Barra, the youth cafe, which was built with the help of Lottery funding when the community hall had to be replaced, was praised by participants. Several other facilities in Barra, which some focus group participants thought would be regarded as part of statutory provisions on the mainland, had been successfully completed on the basis of community initiative and fund raising. These included Castlebay's pre-school facility, the Learning Centre, and a day care centre for older people. Even following the successful establishment of such facilities, the voluntary efforts on part of community members has continued, as the managing system of these facilities has consisted of voluntary committees. In-migrants noted that Barra residents had been so used to contributing to their community in substantial and extraordinary ways that they were not fully aware of how much more they have done for their community compared with residents in other communities.

Sports facilities were generally thought to suit men better than women - sports stereotypically associated with men (e.g. football) were easily available, but those stereotypically associated with women (e.g. aerobics) tended to be unavailable.

7.6.6 Lifestyle in-migrants: views on community life

When expanding on the attractive aspects of the islands, one major feature referred to was the fact that it is easy to get to know people of communities due to their small size, and related to this, the community spirit and perceptions of safety.

"I think we have a tremendous sense of community. Living in a small village, you do not know well everybody, but we know each other by sight. And everyone is very supportive. I just felt we were made so very welcome there. And the other related aspect is security that you have. I feel that especially as I am getting older. I can walk down the road at midnight without looking over my shoulder and certainly without locking my front door."

Several examples were highlighted of the significant level of support experienced in communities, for example, accommodation provided to a family when their house had been affected by a fire, or support given to a person when she recovered from an accident in a hospital on the mainland.

The topic of religion and related Sunday concerns were only raised by participants in one focus group in Stornoway. These issues may seem less of a priority for many people than the media may suggest. In nearly all cases there was an overwhelming wish by the focus group participants not to offend people by infringing on religious beliefs. While all in-migrants had had some insights into the way of life in the Outer Hebrides before they arrived there, experiencing the everyday reality as residents - as opposed to holiday makers- struck some of them powerfully. A Scottish and an English in-migrant used the adjective 'foreign' to describe the Outer Hebrides.

7.6.7   In-migrants: views on integration

The topic of integration for in-migrants from other parts of the UK was explored in particular in one of the two interviews. The interviewee talked about very difficult experiences of exclusion in Lewis, which to a large degree she attributed to her English nationality. She blamed herself for not being properly prepared to be confronted with her English culture, and that the process had been a valuable experience for her. However, after two years in Lewis, she still did not feel welcome. Her particular concerns were with her young son, who had been very popular in his previous school in England, but had found no friends in the Outer Hebrides. The boy was "petrified of going to school." She commented that this experience was shared by other English in-migrants she knew, and there seemed to be a common cycle that in-migrants tend to leave after a 2 year period.

Conversely some in-migrants in Barra reported that the fact that they had come from elsewhere had given them an elevated status, where people felt they had general expertise or skills always worthwhile drawing upon.

7.6.8   In-migrants: views on Gaelic language

Many returners as well as in-migrants described Gaelic as an asset to the Outer Hebrides, and that the language and culture were very attractive features of the islands. The hope was expressed that the area will remain the stronghold of the language. However, challenging issues were also identified. There was agreement that it was difficult to acquire the language, which most in-migrants had attempted in some form. This was attributed in part to the fact that it was always possible to communicate in English, and that Gaelic speakers were easily willing to switch to English when they found themselves in the company of people with poor or no Gaelic language skills.

Some in-migrant identified felt that good language learning provisions existed for adult (and child) learners, but that there was little available beyond beginners' level. Some thought that the larger employers could do more to provide Gaelic lessons for non-native staff.

Some migrants commented that when they had tried to learn the language, there were individual native speakers who mocked their efforts, or conveyed an impression that they were 'mangling' the language. Some new arrivals felt that they would never be able to have command of the language in any significant way.

7.7 International economic in-migrants' motivations and experiences

The following findings emerged from three in-depth interviews with employers of migrants and with twelve migrant workers, conducted in Lewis and Barra in June/July 2006.

7.7.1 International migrants: the employers' view

We interviewed three employers:

o One had a total workforce of 70 more than half of which were migrant workers from mainly one EU accession state. The majority of these were in unskilled jobs.

o Another employers' migrant workers made up around 20% of his total workforce and all were in skilled jobs. The level of demand is unpredictable level resulting in short-term contracts with possibilities for extension.

o The third employers' international workers constituted about 10% of the total workforce and all were in unskilled jobs. Length of contracts were largely defined by the time they told the employer they wanted to stay.

Reasons for employing migrant workers

All three employers made the case that there was insufficient labour supply available locally and especially two argued that without migrant workers, the sustainability of their businesses would be at risk, and thereby also jobs for local people. One of the employers reported that there had been little help from the Job Centre to fill vacancies.

Recruitment of migrant workers

One of the employers used to be in contact with a recruitment agent in an EU accession state, who helped to recruit workers. At the beginning, he was very wary, because he had heard of recruitment agents exploiting people. However, in this case, he was satisfied. As in many other businesses with migrant workers (HIE, 2005), this employer subsequently relied on informal networks through migrants' family members. In fact, this was the only method of recruitment used by another employer. Having responded to a speculative application by a worker from an accession state, further migrant workers were recruited on the basis of that one person's network in his country of origin.

Another employer had hired his skilled migrant workforce (welders and fabricators) through an agency based in Inverness. Due to the involvement of an agent, migrants received slightly less pay than their local counterparts, although the company pays the same. The employer could see advantages in working without an agency - it would save the company and the workers money. However he found that the challenges of dealing with the bureaucratic processes involved in employing migrant workers, having to find accommodation, and ensuring transport is available to and from work meant that it was preferable to have an agency taking care of those aspects, especially given the short-term nature of their contracts.

Migrants workers' contracts

Two employers could provide contracts to their migrant workers which were the same as those for the local employees. In one case all contract documents had been translated into the native language of the migrant workers. The third employer worked with a recruitment agency which had completed all the paperwork by the time the workers arrive, and which also organised migrant workers' travel to Scotland and back, and their accommodation in the Outer Hebrides.

The need for continuous support

Other challenges were described as being more related to personal needs that individual workers may have. The principle the employer expressed was that "looking after migrant workers is a continuous thing.". Often, there is one member of a family that migrates, and then others join them. For example, a mother who was employed in the business will have her small son and his grandmother joining them. The employer expressed his intention to ensure that the son can go to school, and that the mother and grandmother can work shifts in a way that one of the women is always available for the boy.

Two of the three employers interviewed also described that their migrant workers were eager to work as many hours as possible, and often, do not want to take their holidays, but prefer to work. The first question when people arrive is whether they can work overtime – but the legal maximum is 48 hours, even if they would like to work for longer.

Migrants' plans to stay or leave

In one business, all the core workers (as opposed to the seasonal) who were employed four years ago had stayed. Nobody had left for other posts in the UK, and nobody, not even the highly skilled, seemed to be looking to go elsewhere. In fact, one married couple had bought a house in the Outer Hebrides, which underlined their intention to stay. The couple was able to get a mortgage without any problems.

Migrants' life in the Outer Hebrides

One employer reported that the migrant workers like life in Stornoway, and seem not to be interested in working anywhere else. The cities do not hold any particular attraction for them, but they are happy to work in a more rural area. However, it was also observed that the migrants needed to adjust a lot, especially with regard to prices. The interviewee had noted that when the migrants first arrived, they preferred not to eat in the canteen due to their perceptions of high prices. However, all this has changed now.

There were indicators of integration in the community. For example, all employers had observed their workers mingling with Scots in the community. Everyone was said to join in when there is a night out, and one interviewee emphasised that there are no hostilities from the local population as they seem to be well aware that the company have exhausted all skills locally. Moreover, people in the community had got in touch with one of the employers to tell him how pleased they were with their considerate new neighbours. The interviewee suspected that Baltic nations are very similar in culture to the Scottish, which may be one reason why they get on so well. However, he also thought that it might be possible that migrants would be perceived differently by the community if they were of a different race.

Language

In the case of both companies, it was explained that the majority of migrants did not speak English. In one instance, much of the documentation, including work contracts and safety documents, had been translated into the migrant workers' language. In the other case, the employer had made sure that there were always some interpreters in each shift. One employer had also noted that the employees were continuously improving their English language skills.

7.7.2   International migrant workers: motivations to come to the Outer Hebrides

Reasons for coming to Lewis and Barra ranged from wanting to try something new, and having had the recommendation by a family member to having identified and secured a job through the internet.

However those whose working patterns included short to medium-term contracts abroad had been motivated by lack of work or low wages in their home country. For example, earnings in Riga were described as amounting to around £120 / month for jobs such as shop assistant, factory worker, teacher, and doctor. It was added that if you are a good doctor, you may earn £150 / month.

A migrant worker from Asia, who had been in Stornoway for two years, had wanted to come to Europe to work after having spent a long period in Abu Dhabi. The recruitment agency had sent him to Stornoway, and for him, the priority had been to arrive legally, after which he would always be able to change jobs and locations. Another worker from Asia had come to take over a restaurant from a friend, who was leaving.

One Western European migrant had come mainly for quality of life reasons. She had chosen Scotland as a holiday destination for over 25 years before her personal circumstances enabled her to migrate there. While the wish to settle in the Outer Hebrides was the main motivation, she also had strong business ideas, and was ready to make a living there, and contribute to the sustainability of communities through her planned business.

However, in Barra, motivations by migrants from the Accession States seemed at least in three out of the four cases to have been partly linked with the wish to experience a new place, a new culture and learn English. While job availability was, of course, seen as a prerequisite for living in Barra, there was significantly less emphasis on the size of the earnings than had been expressed by migrant workers who had arrived in the Stornoway area.

7.7.3   International migrants: views on jobs and careers

While many of the workers performing relatively unskilled tasks in the Stornoway area had often had long term contracts, the skilled workers in the study had short term contracts. Positive and negative aspects were associated with the short term nature of their employment. On the one hand, for those with families back in their home country, it allowed workers to return at regular intervals. On the other hand, the different short term jobs taken abroad meant that there was always an agency involved, and some of the wages had to be paid to it. There were also uncertainties about entitlements, such as sick pay and holidays. On the whole though, they regarded the agency positively in terms of its conditions, and the quality of

accommodation it provided. The agency had also provided a minibus driven by a worker who picked up and dropped off his colleagues after their shifts.

One priority for all migrant workers from accession states interviewed in the Stornoway area was the ability to work as many hours as possible. It was explained by the skilled workers that if they worked no more than 8 hours a day, their salaries would be similar to what they could earn in their country of origin. Interestingly, this seemed of less importance for three out of the four workers interviewed in Barra, who also wished to experience life in Scotland, and engage with its culture and language. This group were more interested in: "attractions" to visit, and "things to do" outside work.

A chef with previous experience in 5 star hotels was happy in his job in Stornoway, but regretted the absence of 5 star hotels, where he felt he could learn more, and where promotion possibilities were better. However, he was delighted with the fact that he had been given the opportunity by his employer to complete an HNC 3 (covering cost-savings, customer satisfaction, storage of food) at the local college.

One migrant from an EU 15 country reported the most disappointing experience with (self-) employment. Against her expectations, she could not obtain any funding for her business idea from the local enterprise company, although she was convinced it was based on a sound business plan. This was particularly upsetting to her, since the promise of the business had given her an important incentive to go and settle in the Outer Hebrides. She subsequently felt trapped, as she had given up her employment in the country of her origin. Although she applied for all kinds of jobs (restaurants; offices) she remained unemployed for several years, and felt there were no real opportunities for her. She felt that unskilled jobs tend to go to local students. She perceived the labour market situation as poor, and that the potential which tourism offers had not been fully exploited in the Outer Hebrides. Although she finally did secure employment she stated:

 "It is impossible to come here without a husband who can provide for you, or without money, unless you manage to become self-employed in the tourism sector."

7.7.4 International migrants: views on housing

Most migrants in the Stornoway area were satisfied with their housing situation, one commenting that it compared to the provisions in her native country. However, the fact that accommodation was generally tied to a place of employment could limit the ability to look for other jobs. At the same time, migrant workers were relieved that employers provided accommodation, and had little confidence that they themselves would / could secure housing of the standard they now had.

While in general, overcrowding was not raised as a problem; one interviewee mentioned an example of nine people sharing a house with two bathrooms and one kitchen. Although she conceded that it was a big house, some lodgers there had been tempted to find their own place, but their lack of English was a barrier, as well as unaffordable rents. Compared to the situation of some Polish workers an interviewee was aware of, who live in "a big room with a lot of shelves – beds", she regarded her own situation as very satisfactory.

In Barra, a migrant had experienced the accommodation offered by the employer as too crowded, and also did not get on very well with one of the flatmates. She therefore placed an advert in a local paper to look for accommodation, and was

surprised that the process of securing a place had been smooth and quick. However, in other cases in Lewis, migrants had similar experiences to rural residents in general in finding housing. Accommodation tends to be particularly difficult to obtain during the holiday season, when places migrants had previously occupied are given to tourists.

A Western European interviewee in Lewis judged her housing situation to be "completely disappointing". She had to move many times, also due to holiday lets which were given to tourists. "It was really bad." The place she had managed to secure at the time of the interview was not a place she felt comfortable in, but high rents prevented her from looking elsewhere.

Employers' perspective

All employers described problems with finding adequate housing for their migrant workers, which was part of the reason why one of them used a recruitment agency. Another employer found that the Council had not been helpful in this context, and felt he had been "fobbed off". He did not believe there was much promise in approaching the local enterprise company for help. So to prevent the workers from having to stay in a hostel, the company sourced housing for the workers themselves. The employer suspected that it would have been futile for migrant workers to look for housing themselves due to a lack of trust by landlords. The company negotiated housing with the owners of the property, and took responsibility that the rent was being paid. The employer acknowledged that in the meantime, people may have got used to migrant workers and they may not face the same problem as initially. However, the company was still securing accommodation for them, so as to make sure it was of a good standard. So far, none of this employer's workers had complained about their housing situation.

Similarly, another employer had found accommodation for his overseas workers. He ensured that the housing was close to the shopping facilities of the island to support the migrant workers in their private lives. Although as a consequence, the workplace was a good distance away from the migrants' accommodation, a company bus picked them up from, and gave them a lift back to their houses.

7.7.5   International migrants: view on health services

It was noticeable that all migrant workers who had a level of English with which they could communicate effectively had been involved in some translation work for non-English speaking colleagues that needed medical attention. In some cases, when those people were not available to accompany a person without English, they had written notes for the doctor about the colleagues' symptoms.

While interviewees on short term contracts were not entirely clear about their entitlements to health services, those with long-term contracts rated the provisions highly, including preventative services. An interviewee reported that a female colleague had received excellent treatment for her cancer, and was sure that in her country of origin, she would not have been able to afford the service. However, a lack of dentists in the Stornoway area was identified; one interviewee explaining that she had tried for six months to get an appointment. At the same time, one migrant reported that he had needed to use emergency dental treatment, and had been satisfied with the service.

In Barra, migrants were acutely aware of a lack of certain health facilities.

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Employers' perspective

One employer was very pleased that his employees' contacts with health services (doctors, hospital, and dentist). He gave an example of a woman whose son had cancer, and who was very concerned that he might not get the best possible treatment in her country of origin (an EU accession state). A doctor in Stornoway, who was approached about the problem, asked for the son's case notes, and after examining them, could assure the woman that in Scotland, they would have treated her son exactly the same. Macmillan nurses were also involved and people at the church rallied round, especially when the son passed away.

A migrant woman with cancer had been treated in Glasgow, and had said that if she had been at home (an EU accession state); she would have died as the treatment there would have been too expensive. There has been substantial help from the local hospital. The employer expressed his appreciation of the situation *"because we know our workers are well looked after."*

7.7.6   International migrants: views on education

A Western European migrant had been keen to take up further education courses provided by the local college in Stornoway. However, she had been informed that she was not eligible for the course. In one case when a compatriot had tried to take a course, it was cancelled due to too few students. When more students joined, and the course took off after all, she had not been informed. She described her experiences with the college as "scandalous".

By contrast, a migrant in Barra had examined the possibilities the Learning Centre offered, and had taken several courses, which she felt had benefited her. At the same time, none of the migrants interviewed in Barra had received any information on possible ESOL courses, but some migrants professed their keenness to improve their English.

7.7.7   International migrants: views on community life

Most interviewees had generally positive experiences of their lives in the Outer Hebrides. Several commented positively on the fact that this was a rural environment, and that they liked the quiet, high quality life (sometimes contrasted with cities) and appreciated the opportunity for outdoor pursuits. Some participants contrasted Stornoway with their experiences of life back in the city where they had come from.

However they also recognised the downside of rural life, for example, the lack of privacy. Moreover, interviewees in their 40s acknowledged that while for them, the rural life was ideal, the 17 to 20 year olds might be looking to go to the cities. This was in some ways confirmed by young migrants in Barra, who certainly considered a move to a livelier place, although not necessarily a large city.

In the case of workers in Lewis whose only free day was Sunday, there were regrets that no shops were open.   One person expressed her hope that there might be a ferry sailing on Sundays soon, as its absence meant you had to cut your holidays short.   Migrants commented that they may miss the warmer weather, the sun, and a young woman from a capital city of her country of origin said that she would like there to be more shops and longer opening hours.

For those whose knowledge of English was very poor, it was important to be sent reading materials, including newspapers, in their native language from home, or from family members who lived in the metropolitan centres of the UK.

"It's very hard for people who don't speak English. It's a vacuum. In London, they have Russian newspapers. It's very nice. My daughter sends them. People have this problem. They are in a vacuum."

Other items the migrants missed were the foods they were used to from their countries of origin. A particular case was also made for having multi-cultural events in Stornoway, for example, through foreign films.

Migrant workers' free time was spent in various activities including: sitting a driving test, gardening, knitting, going out to the pub or just meeting with friends of their own nationality, other nationalities, and Scots. There were examples of taking part in activities like community events or going to church.

Staying in touch with their families in their countries of origin was rated important, and the predominant method to do so was the mobile phone, rather than email, and many people visited their home countries regularly.

7.7.8   International migrants: views on English

Migrants workers in the Stornoway area recognised that most of their colleagues had very poor English. One migrant worker who had lived in Scotland for over two decades had been joined by his two brothers four years ago, and reported that they depended on their children, who were at the local school, to translate. The interviewee himself found ESOL provisions to have improved. While in the past, such provisions had only been available at night, when restaurant workers could not attend them, the Learning Shop also offered courses during daytime. He still knew that several people were not attending them, as they felt they cannot learn another language because they were too old. They also had very little time to study.

In other cases, it was commented that after a late shift, which finishes at 8pm, it is hard to attend classes as people are tired. Participants also identified problems with the quality of the lessons: classes could be too big ("15 people is too many"), rendering them ineffective as there are too many questions and too much explaining. Also, it was explained that with a group of Russian speakers who were beginners, it is difficult for the non-Russian speaking teacher to explain the material she was teaching, and a student with better English knowledge had to translate at times. It was suggested that for the very beginners, it would help if the teacher could communicate in the students' native language. In addition, the need for language tuition for those who were beyond beginners' level was identified.

In Barra, at the time of the interviews, no ESOL classes were on offer.

Even those with limited English were very interested in Gaelic culture and language, and had tried to find out more about it through conversations with locals. There were also some fears that their own language could not be learned by their children in the Outer Hebrides.

7.7.9   International migrants: access to services

Migrant workers' problem with opening bank accounts has been widely reported in several studies in the UK.   This is also an issue in the Outer Hebrides where employers or recruitment agencies do not arrange for bank accounts for their worker.   Not having an account has many inconveniences and humiliating consequences. As opposed to everyone else, the migrants were paid in cash; they had no debit card which they could use to order items, including flight and bus tickets - but the distance purchase of such items is essential in remote communities. The interviewee explained how embarrassed he felt when he had to ask his Scottish friends to please accept his cash, and help him out with their debit card to book travel tickets on the internet.

Employers also reported problems with workers opening bank accounts, but with substantial paperwork on part of the employer, this challenge could be overcome.

On two other occasions, the same migrant had to deal with forms.   Once when he wanted to apply for UK resident status he sought advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), but felt disappointed by the kind of help he had received.   He had left with a long list of what civil servants to get in touch with, and what forms to ask for. Despite his good language skills, he felt out of his depth using and understanding the bureaucratic language.

7.7.10   International migrants: future plans

In Lewis it was mainly students and other young people who planned to leave in the short or medium term. In Barra, three young migrants could not see themselves staying long-term on the island in part due to the limited labour market opportunities, but also because they felt there was a lack of things for them to do. In the case of a young woman co-habiting with her partner of the same nationality, she suspected they would return to their country of origin in case of a pregnancy, in part because health service arrangements would be easier.

There were people with family commitments, for example, young mothers, or fathers-to-be, whose wives and children in their country of origin could shape their decisions to return.

"It's a scary thought whether the children should join their mothers, as they do not speak any English."

In some cases, there were uncertainties about how to secure long-term employment, find a job for the spouse also, and overcome difficulties with housing. It seemed that such uncertainties prevented migrants from considering staying long-term. The concerns had been exacerbated by experiences of colleagues, who had given up their jobs and housing in their country of origin to start a long-term job abroad, and then found out that the employment was not long term at all.

A woman in her 40s, who had a long term contract and whose colleagues were in a similar position had asked compatriots for how long they expected to stay. Those who were 40 years and older said they would only return if their manger told them they were too old to work. But in general, they were hoping to stay 5 years, 10 years, or all their lives. For the younger people, the maximum was 5 years. In this context, the interviewee emphasised again how good their earnings were. Even if the living costs are higher, their wages meant that they could afford this.

7.7.11   International migrant worker uncertainties

There were several important issues that migrant workers (in the Stornoway area) had discussed amongst themselves but had not managed to resolve. These include:

o **National Insurance Numbers**: the workers with a short-term contract thought that these numbers would not be allocated to them before they would leave again, and were not sure about the implications of this.

o **Sick leave**: the workers with a short-term contract (and one with a longer term one) were not sure whether they were entitled to sick leave, and pointed out that in their country of origin, a health insurance would cover the leave.

o **Health services**: the workers with a short-term contract were not aware of the health services which are available for free. They knew it was possible to get emergency treatment, but did not know what they were entitled to beyond this. One interviewee reported that he still had a health insurance in his country of origin, and was not sure whether to cancel it.

o **Taxes:** One quite common concern was that once the migrant workers return to their country of origin, the government can ask about their income abroad, and ask the workers to pay the difference in the tax rate between the country of origin and the UK.

o **Pensions**: "if you have worked in [your country of origin] for 10 years, maybe the government says you haven't worked for long enough to be entitled to a pension." Are those that have worked for a longer period of time in the UK entitled to a pension?

o **UK passport**: How can you get a UK passport? For how long would you have had to stay in the UK? Linked with this question, it was commented that if migrant workers were able to get a UK passport, they would not be in danger of having to pay taxes on the earnings gained abroad in their country of origin. Do you need to speak English to become a UK citizen?

o **Help for staying on**: What help can people get if they want to stay on? It was suggested by an interviewee with a temporary contract who had come through a recruitment agency that at least help with accommodation would need to be provided.

o **Entitlement to school education**: One migrant workers' child is 5 years old, and has remained in her country of origin. She would consider taking him with her to Stornoway, but does not know whether if he can attend the local school.

We found that at the moment, people do not have this information, and this may be a reason why they do not want to stay. One interviewee emphasised her close contacts with a Scottish co-worker as crucial in getting access to information about services and provisions. For example, as she and her husband had resident status, she was informed by her colleague that there were flight discounts available for them. The interviewee suspected that without her colleague, she would not have been able to know about this arrangement.

7.8 Returners' motivations and experiences

7.8.1 Returners: motivations to return

Returners tended to stress family ties, such as (ageing) parents and siblings. Family reasons for returning or migrating to the Outer Hebrides included for all participants with young children (migrants and returners) the wish to bring them up in a safe and child-friendly environment.

"My father passed away at the time, and it was a case of either abandoning the home, the croft, or carrying on basically here, and carrying on where the family had lived for the last 250 years. So I did that, and 31 years later, I am still here."

If we compare the actual reasons given by returners with those which leavers anticipate would be key issues it is clear that family ties are most significant among returners. Those living away from the Islands are more likely to identify suitable work as being a key factor. Although this was very important to those who have actually returned (54%) it was second to 'close to family'; and only just ahead of 'safe environment'. This perhaps suggests that family and community have become more important than work ambitions for those who have returned.

Figure 35 Motivations to return (actual and potential)
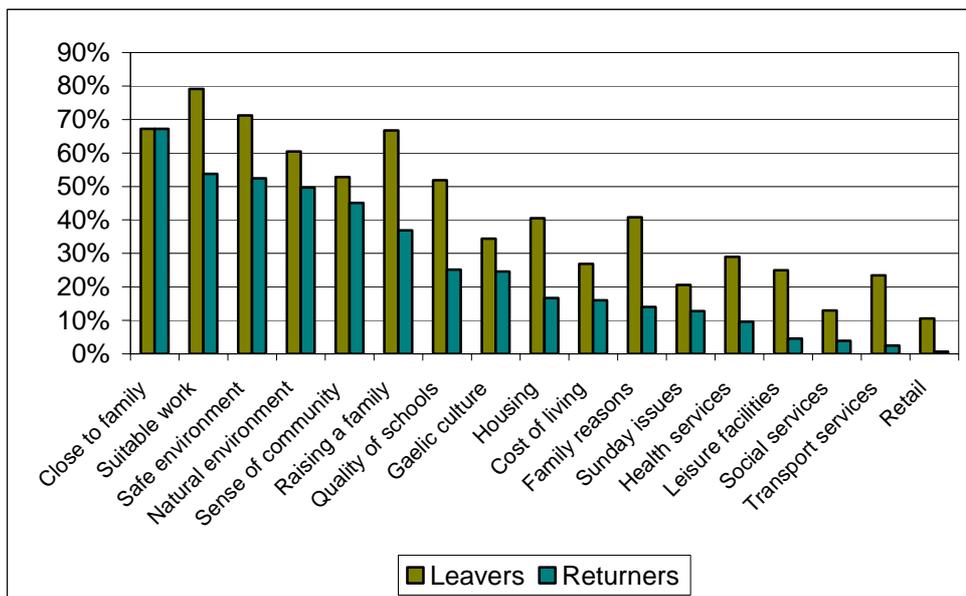
Source: Hall Aitken Survey 2006 (leavers n=323, returners n=360)

7.8.2 Returners: views on health

The hospital provision in Stornoway was deemed to be of a high standard. Its quality was described by a nurse who worked there as "on par with private services on the mainland." Access to health services was compared favourably with the mainland.

7.8.3   Returners: views on housing

One couple in particular felt that the discrepancy between the house prices and their salaries was a reason for their plan to leave Lewis - the husband's home area- and to look for better paid employment on the mainland in the hope that that would strengthen their position in the housing market.

"The house prices have gone through the roof, absolutely extortionate not helped by the fact that many people can offer for houses much more than I can. And it's pushing house prices up. And the wage levels at the moment on the island, we can't afford to get a mortgage on the wages we are earning so it's making it more and more difficult for us."

7.8.4   Returners: views on community life

Discussions in Stornoway and Balivanich recognised that while the community spirit in the Outer Hebrides was still stronger than elsewhere, it had also reduced in quality. This change was partly attributed to changing lifestyles, such as a reduction in heavy agricultural work which in the past would have been carried out in groups.

In Barra there seemed to be less of a sense of change in this respect. One participant attributed this to the fact that, by contrast to other rural communities, Barra had not received a large number of in-migrants who had had an impact on the local culture and values.

Participants also highlighted the peace and quiet, and the pace of life in the Outer Hebrides. In Stornoway, this was sometimes linked with Sundays in particular. Returners found that the situation with regard to Sundays had relaxed a little over the past two decades or so. They reported that when they were children, they were not allowed to watch television or go on a bike - activities which children today were able to do. It was also regarded as acceptable today to start an engine on a boat and catch fish. The two single most important issues appeared to be leisure facilities and ferry services.

"Perhaps we should be a bit more open and willing to accept that not everyone does go to church, not everyone comes from a religious background. If you do, the facilities are there. But if you want to go swimming on a Sunday, if you want to do anything on a Sunday, you should be able to do it as long as you do not impinge on others' human rights ."

The availability of leisure facilities appeared to be particularly important to participants with a family. It was commented that even if the sports centre was open for two hours on a Sunday, for example, from 3 to 5 in the afternoon, this would mean that the family could get out of the house when the weather is poor.

Comparisons were made with the Isle of Skye, where a Sunday ferry service initially caused much upset, but which seemed to have died down once the service was under way. It was assumed that the service had not affected community life detrimentally in Skye. Similarly, the Sunday flights into Stornoway do not seem to affect people, are hardly noticeable, and no objections are voiced against them any more.

In all these discussions, it appeared sometimes that the process in which decisions were taken about Sunday activities was as much of concern as the actual

constraints. There was a suspicion that it was mainly religious views that had access to the public debate.

"Despite a lot of evidence that public opinion would support such sailings, there is silence. There will always be a religious opinion, and that one will be taken into account, rather than the views of the majority. It impinges on what you can do."

7.8.5   Returners: views on Gaelic

Many returners described Gaelic as an asset to the Outer Hebrides, and that the language and culture were very attractive features of the islands. The hope was expressed that the area will remain the stronghold of the language. However, challenging issues were also identified. There was agreement that it was difficult to acquire the language.

7.8.6   Returners: likelihood of staying

The majority of returners thought that they would stay in the Outer Hebrides indefinitely (72%). However around one in ten thought that would leave within five years. And 18% of returners were not sure whether they would stay or not.

8 Factors needed for sustainable communities

This section sets out some of the key current factors that our research has identified will underpin community sustainability in the Outer Hebrides. It summarises the key outcomes from the Scenario Planning exercise that we facilitated. It then sets out the desirable situation in ten to fifteen years time across a range of aspects that were identified through Scenario Planning and other strands of our research and identifies some of the actions that agencies will need to focus on to achieve these outcomes.

8.1 Scenario planning

To start developing a view of migration in the future and the factors that may influence people coming to, or leaving the islands, we held a scenario planning session for a group of key stakeholders.

At this workshop, the aim was to look at the trends for the future of the population and economy, followed by a series of exercises to identify the most important drivers of change over the next 15 years. If the key drivers can be identified, then strategies can be developed that enable co-ordinated management of issues that will impact on migration. Equally the drivers that are less easily influenced can be identified and strategies for management or containment adopted. The outcome should be a better appreciation of the issues going forward and the actions that will have the greatest impact.

The workshop involved exercises in mapping key drivers and plotting them on an impact/ uncertainty grid, developing alternative futures and identifying the most attractive set of outcomes.

8.1.1 Mapping key drivers

Participants developed around 92 different 'concepts' and mapped them on a wall. These were then loosely clustered into a wide range of issues for brief discussion. There was a general consensus that the exercise had captured the most important issues over the next 15 years, as far as could be predicted. The key issues are listed below in no particular order:

o   Alternative energy sources (including new oil finds; existing bank of expertise among out-migrants)

o   Branding and promotion

o   Gaelic and Hebridean culture

o   Cost of living

o   Crofting support/ community ownership

o   Dependency of older people

o   Economic diversity, renewable energy – preservation versus progress

o   Funding distribution

- o Housing – affordability and availability of land
- o In-migrants: support and integration
- o Joined-up thinking at local level
- o Learning & skills – school level and apprenticeships
- o Leisure, recreation, social, community infrastructure.
- o Peace, safety, security, culture
- o Regional policy direction (central government)
- o Secure employment – quality opportunities
- o Support for business start-ups
- o Tourism – cultural identity – opportunities
- o Transport – costs & flexibility
- o UHI – as a resource/ knowledge centre
- o Using technology

8.1.2   Assessing impact and uncertainty

The next stage of the process involved mapping these issues on to an impact/uncertainty matrix, shown below in Figure 36. This enabled participants to distinguish between the issues that would potentially create major change and those that were contextual. The important part is identifying those drivers that will shape the future of the islands and have a direct impact on migration. The issues in the bottom half of the matrix, particularly those in the bottom right quadrant are the issues that will have the most impact.   This is because those that are more certain will not influence change as significantly as those with a high level of uncertainty. So issues with a high impact and a high level of uncertainty are those that will underpin any future scenarios that emerge.

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Figure 36 Impact/uncertainty matrix
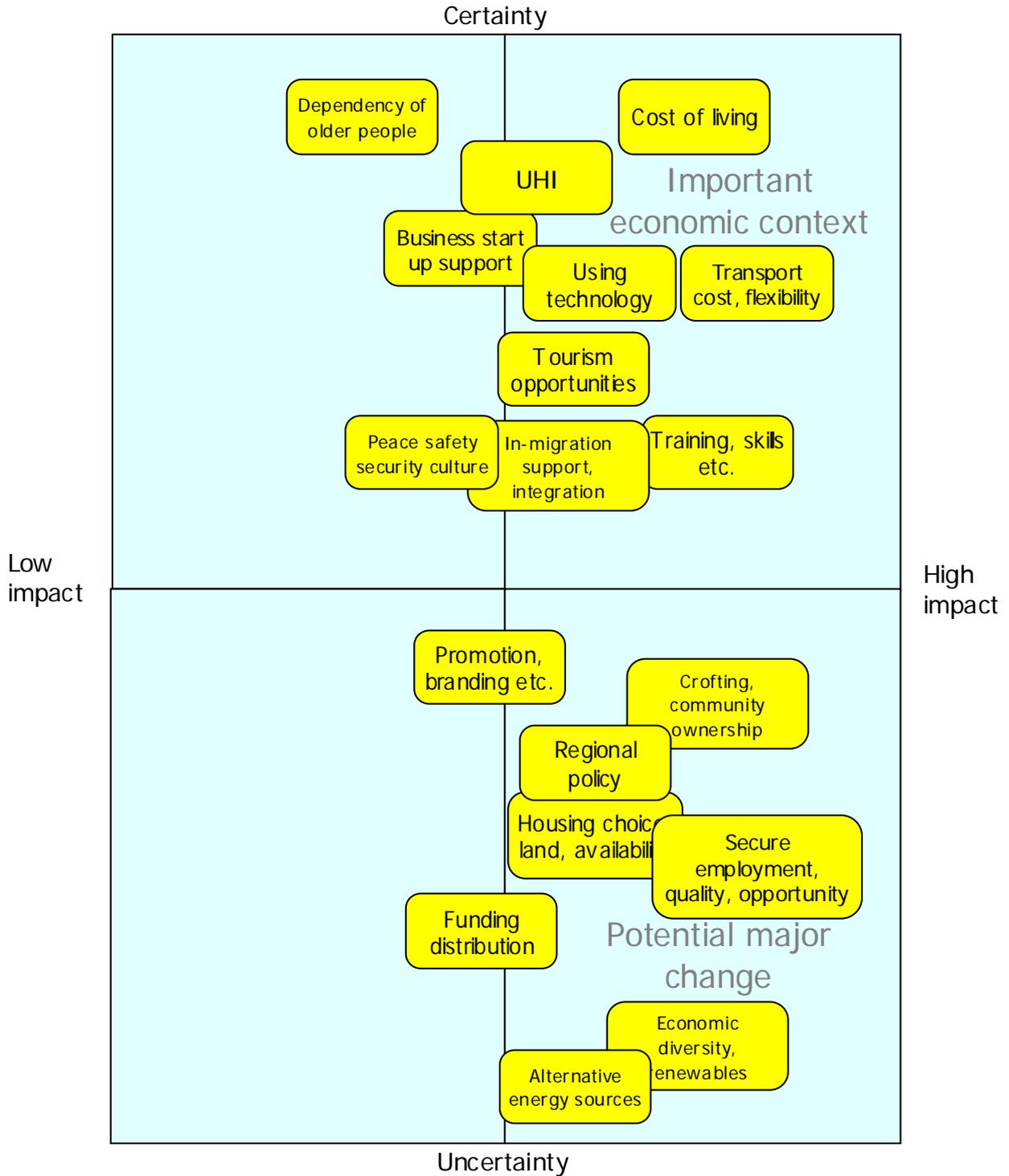
8.1.3 Alternative futures (scenarios)

The workshop then divided into smaller groups to look at the inter-relationship between some of these high impact and high uncertainty issues by examining alternative futures. Several interesting issues arose form this exercise including:

o The impact of the availability, source and cost of energy could lead to completely different policy contexts at local and national level. The ability to be a clean energy exporter would allow the Outer Hebrides agencies to pursue many other desirable policies (because of additional economic influence and a higher profile negotiating position) but there are many hurdles to overcome before reaching this point.

o There is a delicate balance to be struck between the population, housing stock and public services. The many different possible scenarios that can be generated through changing the variables of age profile, housing availability and cost of providing public services points to the need for a careful population management strategy as the essential underpinning of overall economic strategy.

o The attractiveness of 'community self-determination' is tempered by an increased risk to the islands from this strategy. If this strategy is to succeed, we must assume that for the majority of cases, new forms of land tenure and management are economically, socially and environmentally superior to current arrangements. This will require the commitment and support of local agencies and Central Government.

8.1.4 Scenario planning conclusions

To conclude the session, participants ranked the main issues in terms of attractiveness, as identified from the different scenarios they had developed. The final outcome produced a short list of 'essentials' in terms of policy going forward:

o Sustainable employment

o Private-sector led economic diversity

o Housing provision

o Self determination; and

o Clean energy

Some of the pitfalls that are to be avoided include:

o The risk from uncontrolled growth

o Decline in environment quality and cultural values of the Outer Hebrides

o Continuation of the dependency/ subsidy culture; and

o Threat to the islands' uniqueness

These messages were distilled into a four point agenda:

o The focus needs to be local, trying to do fewer things (that will enable change) effectively;

o Developing a detailed and coordinated 'clean energy' agenda;

o Producing a coherent and deliverable plan; and

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o   Adopting a professional approach.

8.2 A sustainable future in 10 to 15 years

Based on the scenario planning exercise and the level of consensus highlighted in our research we have set out the desirable situation for the Outer Hebrides in ten to fifteen years time across a number of themes. We have then set out some of the key current issues that local agencies and communities need to address to fulfil these scenarios.

8.3 Jobs/ economy

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

A stable and growing economy based around a skilled workforce adding value to the wealth of natural resources (food production, energy, crafts). An economy that gives graduates and skilled workers opportunities and choices for employment or business start-up. Key features of this are:

- An enterprising culture that is not afraid to take risks and takes advantage of the significant potential of its current and future residents.

- A skilled and capable construction sector that supports a strong indigenous demand and wins contracts across the Highlands and Islands.

- Public agencies that work together to promote excellence and innovation in service provision and support communities to play an increasing role in meeting their own service needs.

- A customer-focused tourism offer that reflects the unparalleled sense of beauty and wildness of the Outer Hebrides.

- Marketing that promotes the strengths of the Outer Hebrides brand and tourism potential and recognises its limitations.

- A growing community enterprise sector that addresses local market failures in delivering services, flexibly meets the service needs of residents and visitors, and adds value to local communities.

Key issues currently include:

o   An ageing workforce with labour shortages evident or emerging in several sectors;

o   A large potential skilled workforce of those who have left the Islands and live on the mainland or abroad;

o   A limited range of more secure jobs particularly outside of the public sector;

o   Limited capacity in the construction sector and limited aspiration among businesses to grow;

o   The 6-day economy puts the Outer Hebrides at a competitive disadvantage particularly in terms of growing tourism;

- o Under-investment in the tourism infrastructure and limited transport services means it is difficult to take advantage of significant assets;

- o Most businesses selling to consumers rely on customers from off-island, so transport and tourism sectors are key;

- o Many communities still rely too much on public agencies and lack the capacity to change.

8.4 Training and education

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

> *A strong and dynamic University that plays a wider role in the Outer Hebrides community than simply providing education. A prestigious research centre with acknowledged specialisms attracting highly qualified post-graduate researchers, academics and entrepreneurs from across the UK and overseas.*

Key issues include:

- o Limited capacity and resources for Lews Castle/ UHI to develop key specialisms while retaining the traditional FE role;

- o Locally gained qualifications are often viewed as inferior by local employers;

- o There are limited opportunities at present for research studentships.

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

> *A joined up programme of vocational training opportunities that reflects and prioritises the needs of the local labour market. Flexible English and Gaelic language courses are available for the growing in-migrant members of the community.*

Key issues include:

- o The size of the college and its limited resources make it difficult for it to respond to the wide range of vocational training needs that are identified on its own.

- o There is currently not enough training capacity to provide for key skills for the local economy: nurses, mechanics, skilled trades etc.

- o The Outer Hebrides society currently accepts that to succeed must always mean leaving the Islands. Vocational routes need to be highlighted as equally valuable to academic ones.

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

> *Continuing high quality schools that provide the best modern facilities and teaching standards. Gaelic medium teaching is at the heart of a growing Gaelic language revival.*

Key issues include:

o A declining and ageing population in many parts of the Outer Hebrides threatens existing school provision; and

o Declining resources may threaten the current high quality of school education.

8.5 Housing

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

> *A strong, flexible and sustainable housing market that provides affordable opportunities for people at all stages in household formation to access suitable housing. A bold housing strategy that reflects the role of Stornoway and Balivanich as the key focus for the growing Hebridean economy and balances it with the need to regenerate remote rural communities.*

Key issues include:

o The current Housing strategy recognises that housing development is essential for growth and provides for an upbeat scenario of growth. And there is a recognised need to develop a more diverse and flexible housing market – particularly providing opportunities for entry level homes. The Local housing Strategy contains clear objectives and actions to meet housing need and improve the function of the housing system in the islands in order to contribute to sustainable communities.

o Methodologies for calculating housing need do not usually take into account local authorities' aspirations to grow their populations through migration. In this sense, the housing strategy has previously under-estimated the housing investment which the local authority might regard as desirable in order to provide for demand that is currently off-island, including potential returners and in-migrant workers.

o Some of the smaller communities which are feeling the impacts of population decline more sharply also lack accessible and affordable housing for younger people.

8.6 Transport

Desirable situation in 10-15 years

> *An integrated and affordable transport network between and to the Islands that maximises opportunities and minimises barriers to economic growth. Subsidies are deployed fairly across transport modes to address issues of peripherality and market failure in existing services.*

Key issues include:

- o Transport connections at the right times are seen by employers as critical to economic growth.

- o Employers/ businesses rate transport as the single most important factor underpinning growth.

- o The air discount scheme is seen as a success but only covers some routes and does not apply to ferry travel which is very expensive.

- o There is a currently unmet potential to attract back Aberdeen-based oil workers to the Outer Hebrides by improving the timings of the flights.

- o Some bus services (particularly evening services) are not guaranteed in the longer term.

8.7 Health and care

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *A high quality community-focused health and social care service that is recognised as leading good practice in rural health-care. A flexible and skilled workforce in the health and care sector who feel challenged and rewarded.*

Key issues include:

- o Need for continued home-based care services enabling older members of the community to remain in their own communities.

- o Home-based and person-centred services – are labour intensive and there are recruitment problems in certain occupations.

- o It will be difficult to retain specialist services in the Outer Hebrides because of the small and declining population.

- o The high cost of providing home-based services and the declining population may threaten the current level of services.

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8.8 Confidence and self-determination

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *Proud, confident and forward-looking communities strive for a continuing high quality of life and want to play a greater part in shaping their own future. Communities recognise that change and diversity are essential but want to retain those defining features which make the Outer Hebrides unique: landscape, religion, Gaelic language and heritage.*

Key issues include:

- There is an in-built fear of failure and an innate lack of confidence among many native Islanders.

- Individuals and communities currently lack the determination and opportunity to become more involved in decision-making.

- There is an established expectation that the public sector always has the solution.

- There is a perception, particularly among those living away from the Islands, that most power rests with a small number of elites.

- The media coverage of the Outer Hebrides is disproportionately negative and presents a gloomy image to the wider world.

8.9 Integrating in-migrant population

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *There is a coordinated programme of support measures for employers and in-migrants that recognises the basic needs of these workers and their wider value to the economy and to sustaining services and communities. The Outer Hebrides communities welcome and support in-migrants and the skills and diversity they bring. In-migrants recognise that they are part of a unique culture and feel able to play a part in it.*

Key issues include:

- Migrant workers do not have adequate information about rights and entitlements.

- Access to services essential for integration, such as ESOL provisions, are difficult to provide in rural and remote areas. There is limited take-up of ESOL which limits the capacity for non-English speakers to integrate and make use of local services.

- Communities are not prepared for migrants - there is a need for capacity building among native Islanders.

- Employers may not recognise their roles in supporting the provision of services for migrant workers.

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- o Many workers are in the OH for a temporary basis – their needs for integration must also be addressed.

- o Some in-migrants have unrealistic expectations with regard to the 'community spirit' in the Outer Hebrides, their abilities to change communities. Some find the Outer Hebrides 'foreign'.

- o There may be a discrepancy between policies to attract migrants, and the Western Isles Language Plan. Many adults find learning Gaelic difficult.

- o There are also deficiencies in the provision of cultural and religious field for migrants.

8.10 ICT/ Broadband

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *Information and Communication Technology is at the heart of a strong knowledge-based sector. The Outer Hebrides is recognised as a location with state of the art ICT that is accessible, reliable and affordable.*

Key issues include:

- o Good quality and accessible broadband is essential in an isolated community to support businesses and communities. Investment in this can be a competitive advantage particularly in combination with access to secure and clean energy supplies.

- o Increasing use of Internet technologies provides a big opportunity – 25% of Outer Hebrides businesses that could sell on the Internet currently do not.

8.11 Leisure and culture facilities

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *Cultural facilities and events provide residents and visitors with unique opportunities to widen their perspectives and exchange experiences. Leisure and recreation facilities promote enjoyment, health and well-being and support sporting excellence among all sections of the Outer Hebrides community.*

Key issues include:

- o The experience of Skye suggests that a 'feel good factor' is a key characteristic underpinning net in-migration.

- o There is some evidence that recent investment in Stornoway has promoted a greater sense of optimism among younger people and recent returners.

- o However other communities identify poor quality leisure services in Harris, Barra and the Uists: for example the libraries, sports halls and football pitches.

- o There is also a need for more leisure facilities to meet the needs of women and young people.

o   There are issues around access to leisure facilities 7 days a week.

8.12 Environment and quality of life

Desired situation in 10-15 years

> *An unrivalled clean and attractive natural environment continues to attract both visitors and new residents to the Outer Hebrides. The beauty of the natural landscape is protected from damaging development.*

Key issues include:

o   Quality of life and environment are critical in attracting in-migrants.

o   There is a need to balance economic development with protecting the landscape and environment.

o   Townscape improvements and new developments provide an opportunity to improve the physical environment of towns and villages across the Outer Hebrides.

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9   Policies required for a sustainable population

This section outlines some of the key longer term strategy objectives and policy areas that local agencies and communities will need to pursue to achieve the type of sustainable communities outlined in the previous section.

9.1   Overall aims

Our research and population modelling suggest that there are several necessary changes to the existing population trends that require to be addressed in order to re-balance the population structure in the longer term and sustain the local economy in the shorter term.

o   There needs to be a significant increase in the numbers of women under the age of 35 who return to the Islands to reverse the natural population decline.

o   The islands need to attract people, particularly younger people and women, with complementary skills and an enterprising outlook.

o   The population needs in-migrants to address the current and anticipated gaps in the labour force. Particularly semi-skilled manual and personal services staff and skilled trades and associate professional level staff in key sectors.

The potential impacts on different population groups and age structure were outlined in Figure 22 and Figure 23 earlier. This concluded that the most desirable option would be for in-migration to increase by 40% on 2004/05 levels among under 45s. This would equate to an additional 185 people each year. At the same time the numbers of 16 to 24 year olds leaving the Islands should be reduced by around a third. This would mean trying to retain 40 females and 20 males from this age group who currently leave the Islands each year. This population strategy would see the Outer Hebrides population reaching almost 30,000 by the year 2019. However the goal is not simply a numeric one, as a sustainable population requires a more balanced population structure, with more women staying on the Isles and more young people returning or migrating here to work or set up businesses.

Figure 37 Summary of desired population strategy
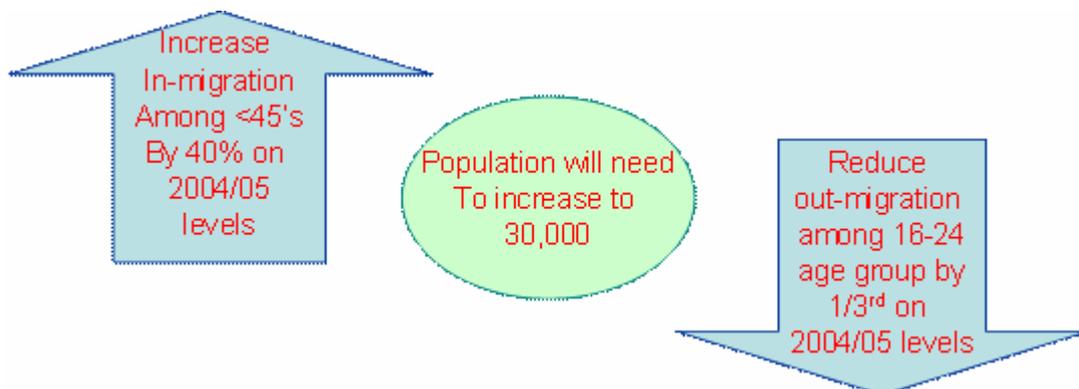
9.2   The policy context

It is important to recognise the existing policy context within which agencies are working to promote sustainable communities.   In suggesting priorities for policy intervention we have looked at links with:

o   Creating Communities of the Future;

o   Strengthening our Island Communities;

o   Western Isles Community Plan;

o   Local Housing Strategy;

o   Local Health Plan;

o   Western Isles Community Wellbeing Plan;

o   Outer Hebrides Cultural Strategy;

o   Creative Industries Strategy;

o   Western Isles Area Tourism Partnership Plan.

We have highlighted under each key topic area how our suggested approach ties in with the relevant wider policy and strategy context.

9.2.1   Joined up approaches

The scenario planning exercise highlighted the importance of developing genuine and effective joint working between agencies. In such a small community and with limited resources it is essential that agencies develop solutions jointly and learn from each other and from past actions.

9.2.2   Building on optimism

There is a clear sense of optimism about the future of the Outer Hebrides at the moment built around:

o   Community land buy-outs giving communities greater responsibility;

o   A revival in Gaelic language, music and culture; and

o   Recent developments such as An Lanntair and the new Sports Centre in Stornoway.

There is a clear opportunity to build on this optimism and the recent up-turn in young people returning to the Islands through joined up action across several areas that impinge on migration.

9.2.3   Sustaining the economy

Our consultations and research have identified several key sectors that have significant potential to grow the local economy and thereby help to sustain the population. Clearly there is a strong link between economic development policy and population outcomes, and the overall aims set out above should underpin all economic development activity.

Renewable energy

The potential for exploiting the significant renewable energy resources in the Outer Hebrides provides one of the few opportunities for sustainable and high value economic growth. However in order for these developments to support a sustainable population there need to be significant downstream and spin-off developments that add value to the primary resource.

For example construction and maintenance jobs associated with wind developments will largely go to males. However developing research and development, IT and related support and supply jobs will provide a wider range of opportunities for men and women.

There is also the need to minimise the impact of any developments on tourism and in-migration in those areas of high landscape and cultural value. Community buy-in will be essential if this industry is to underpin future growth and long-term sustainability.

Using these resources to support a sustainable population might involve:

o   Encouraging energy producing companies to set up and/ or fund Research and Development centres in the Hebrides;

o   Supporting joint projects with UHI and the private sector through funding research posts and seconding staff;

o   Identifying and pursuing local value-added opportunities for economic growth linked to clean and secure energy;

o   Ensuring that some of the income supports community projects and builds community capacity; and

o   Ensuring local procurement and supply agreements benefit local businesses and communities.

University of the Highlands and Islands

The UHI project provides a clear opportunity to widen the range of professional and skilled jobs that are available to attract returning graduates and entrepreneurs. Funding research student-ships for post-graduates is a cost-effective way of creating opportunities for young people to return to the Islands after studying on the mainland. At the same time research such as that being carried out in the energy and environmental sectors by the Greenspace project is highlighting opportunities for business development and private sector spin-offs. Agencies can support this role by:

o   Lending expertise to projects through joint working and secondments;

o   Using the local research capacity in UHI to support their own activities; and

o   Helping to fund research studentships for postgraduates.

Construction sector

Our research suggests a significant current and future potential for the construction industry that is not being fully exploited by indigenous businesses. The lack of capacity and aspiration of the local industry to meet the current demand for services represents a market failure that joint action by local agencies can help to address. The economy needs more people working in skilled trades. In the short-term this

can only be addressed through attracting in-migrants with the required skills. In the longer term more young people need to be encouraged to pursue trades apprenticeships on the Islands. This could involve:

o   A joint and proactive project to identify and support growth potential among local construction businesses;

o   The Council, WIE and HHP supporting short-term skilled in-migrant workers to support growth;

o   A longer term joint training programme involving the above agencies along with the College and CITB to increase the number of skilled trade apprentices and under-write their training costs;

o   A campaign within schools and communities to promote the construction sector, focusing on opportunities for self-employment and good earnings and over-coming traditional stereotypes.

Community sector

Endogenous development (development from within Islands communities) is currently advocated as the solution to many rural problems. This approach may avoid some of the problems associated with 'top-down' strategies which can make the mistake of trying to 'mainstream' rural issues. However successful endogenous development relies on social capital (Alston 2000, Stockdale 2004). There may be a link between education levels and participation in endogenous development programs; 'stayers' are less likely to become involved in such programs than either in-migrants or returners; both these groups are generally more highly educated and affluent (Stockdale 2004).

This supports the suggestion that many rural stayers are 'content with their lot' and unlikely to seek changes; by contrast returners would bring knowledge and skills, and possibly ideas crucial for successful endogenous development (Stockdale 2004). However, it has been found that returning migrants tend to find employment in established public sector positions, rather than driving new development (Stockdale 2004).

Community involvement and ownership are likely to be key factors in developing greater confidence and optimism among people in the Outer Hebrides. This will also lead to more opportunities for community enterprise. Community enterprises can address service areas that the private and public sectors cannot viably provide by being more flexible, responding to local need and taking advantage of a wider range of funding and human resources (including volunteers). This approach has the potential added value of improving local services, developing skills, strengthening community cohesion and raising confidence.

Supporting this type of economic development in the Outer Hebrides will require:

o   Ongoing capacity building within communities; and particularly among indigenous 'stayers';

o   Supporting policies and practices from public agencies;

o   A range of skills being available, including enterprise skills, either on a voluntary or professional basis;

o   Access to innovative and flexible funding sources (e.g. through a CDFI type model); and

 o Access to good quality advice and support.

Tourism

The tourism industry is an important employment sector and has a key role to play in supporting and promoting the unique culture and assets of the Outer Hebrides. The recent branding initiative should provide greater impetus for joint marketing of the tourism product. The Gaelic language provides a unique resource which could be marketed more strongly.

The limited services on a Sunday in the northern part of the Isles are often seen as a constraint to tourism by visitors. But the tourism sector could make this a unique selling point and market this aspect of the Island culture.

The proposed townscape improvements in the Conservation area of Stornoway will also help to make the town more attractive to visitors. However townscape improvements should be a continuing focus for joint action by the planning authority and housing agencies.

Public sector

The three largest public sector agencies: The Comhairle, WIE and WI-NHS provide the majority of employment opportunities across the Outer Hebrides. They should seek to provide the necessary support to the private and community sector through their procurement policies.

These agencies should also work with each other and UHI to provide entry level job opportunities with training and progression routes for those who choose to stay on the Islands.

In the longer term, public agencies should reconsider the feasibility of greater de-centralisation of departments from Stornoway to other parts of the Islands to help sustain more fragile communities. Greater availability of broadband and transport improvements should make this more feasible.

Public agencies should encourage their employees to consider setting up businesses by enabling flexible and part-time working, secondments (e.g. to UHI or community enterprises) and sabbaticals. They could also provide sign-posting and support for enterprise training to their employees.

Policy context

Part of the vision set out in *Creating Communities of the Future* is based around: 'a dynamic renewable energy sector of international renown providing the base for new forms of economic activity.' It also highlights a key role for the private sector in developing the Outer Hebrides economy.

The role of the University of the Highlands & Islands is also identified as a significant component within the vision.

Creating Communities of the future also highlights the role of tourism, envisaging the Outer Hebrides developing as a world class destination. This may be an optimistic vision given the constraints that the sector currently operates within, but there is certainly a role for tourism in providing local employment and in promoting the Outer Hebrides to potential in-migrants.

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Broadening the economic base of individual islands is identified in *Strengthening our Island Communities* as critical to retaining and attracting residents. This document also highlights the potential role of relocating public sector jobs to island communities.

Both *Creating Communities of the future* and *Strengthening our Island Communities* highlight the important role of community ownership in promoting economic growth.

The vision set out in *the Outer Hebrides Creative Industries Strategy* is to become an internationally recognised creative cluster, characterised by a vibrant and economically strong creative industries sector.

9.2.4 Promoting enterprise

There is an acceptance among many stakeholders that the indigenous Outer Hebrides population is somewhat risk-averse. Most young people that we spoke to had not considered starting a business and those who have left the Islands perceive local agencies as being unsupportive. However a strategy for sustainable population requires private sector growth to provide wider opportunities for professional and skilled jobs. With little likelihood of significant inward investment there is a need to promote enterprise from within the Outer Hebrides population.

Given the problems of non-participation by stayers, and the low rate of return by out-migrants, it has been suggested that endogenous development may require an initial top-down approach to assist in attracting qualified out-migrants to return. And if this type of approach is to succeed, communities and policy-makers must accept that this will require rural communities to 'evolve'; this may run counter to the general climate of cultural conservation.

In population terms there is strong evidence that skilled and culturally diverse populations are more enterprising. Populations with higher levels of graduates in the workforce are more likely to have higher rates of business start-ups.

Whilst stayers appear to find employment in traditional industries (Cartmel and Furlong 2000), and returners in the public sector (Stockdale 2004), it is the in-migrant group that is most likely to be self-employed (Hope et al 2003). Indeed there is an identified direct link between in-migration and the formation of new business enterprises (Winters and Rushbrook 2003). There is also evidence from our research in both the Outer Hebrides and Skye to suggest that lifestyle in-migrants are more enterprising. They have shown an element of risk-taking in relocating to a very different community, they tend to have more resources and have high levels of skills and qualifications. However their motivation for self-employment tends to be self-fulfilment and lifestyle flexibility rather than classic entrepreneurship.

Policies and actions around enterprise need to:

o Promote enterprise education more effectively in schools;

o Develop a more tolerant attitude to risk and failure among business support agencies and the wider population;

o Develop incentive packages to attract back entrepreneurs from the Islands who are working on the mainland or abroad;

o Use successful entrepreneurs as role models to promote enterprise among graduates and school leavers;

- Provide support and encouragement to graduates to consider starting a business;

- Develop specific programmes to encourage enterprise among women; and

- Work with 'lifestyle entrepreneurs' to promote more joint working and to identify opportunities for growth (e.g. in the arts and crafts sector).

Policy context

Creating Communities of the future highlights a key role for the private sector in developing the Outer Hebrides economy.

Promoting business start-ups is identified in *Strengthening our Island Communities* as an important aspect in the successful economic revival of Island communities such as Arran and Orkney.

9.2.5   Attracting returners

Aside from developing the economy, promoting enterprise and making housing more accessible there are several other aspects where public agencies in the Outer Hebrides can work on to help attract back returners. These might include:

- Providing incentives to attract graduates into sectors where there are acknowledged recruitment problems or to start up a business. These incentives might include subsidised housing, assistance to pay off student debts or direct grants to overcome the perceived risks.

- Ensuring 'civic engagement' with young people before they leave (i.e. include them in decision-making to ensure youth issues are recognised in community planning and strategies). This can ensure that young people's views and needs are taken into account, as well as promoting an understanding that they have responsibilities for their communities;

- Ensuring those that have left have easy access to information on the developments in their communities (economic, cultural, social), especially job opportunities (similar to the aims and activities of Canada's 'Place aux Jeunes' programme. Another useful example is the bordersworks.co.uk website in the Scottish Borders)

- Providing mechanisms for Islanders living on the mainland to contribute to Island life and encouraging them to do so.

- Careers and enterprise agencies working together to track young people leaving the Islands and share information on their progress and needs.

- Promoting positive messages and good news from the Outer Hebrides and encouraging the local media to do the same.

Policy context

Creating Communities of the future highlights the importance of: a diverse and growing population with a balanced demographic structure allowing young people to move freely as lifestyles change.

Strengthening our Island Communities identifies attracting more people to live in island communities as one of the main challenges to be addressed. One of the key aspirations is a growing population for island communities.

9.2.6   Training & skills

As outlined earlier, there need to be an appropriate range of school-leaver training programmes for public sector jobs with training and progression. Agencies should work together and where possible with the private sector and College to widen the range and increase the quality of these opportunities.

Local training needs to focus on the needs of key local employment sectors and potential growth sectors: energy, construction and health.

Policy context

Strengthening our Island Communities identifies that the lack of further and higher education opportunities is a key strategic weakness. It highlights the important role of UHI in addressing these issues.

9.2.7   Housing

There is a widespread acceptance that housing development is a key component of economic and population growth. There is a need to expand the rented housing sector to provide easier access to:

o   Returning graduates

o   Key workers; and

o   In-migrants

In Skye availability of cheap housing was a key factor in attracting in-migrants and growing the population. There is also evidence that the legacy of affordable housing from the MOD presence in Balivanich has helped to sustain the population and local economy.

The Housing Strategy recognises the key role of housing in supporting a sustainable population. However the Comhairle and HHP will need to continually review the level and nature of housing demand to make sure the Strategy remains relevant.

While we accept the need to focus resources largely on Stornoway, there also needs to be accessible and affordable housing to stem population decline in other parts of the Islands.

Policy context

The *Western Isles Local Housing Strategy* vision is that every resident of the Western Isles is able to live in good quality, warm and affordable homes that meet their needs and that housing contributes to sustaining the economic and social environment. While the strategy aims to meet the needs of existing residents it clearly identifies a role in supporting economic growth and recognizes the important role of housing in achieving this.

Strengthening our Island Communities highlights the importance of overcoming constraints on housing supply such as land-ownership, site availability, planning and infrastructure.

9.2.8   Integrating in-migrants

Public agencies led by WIE need to make a clear plan for how migrant workers will integrate into the Outer Hebrides economy and communities. This should involve working with public and private sector employers to identify their current and future recruitment needs and to establish whether these need to be met through accessing in-migrant workers. Planning for in-migrant support should also link closely with supporting employers to train and source indigenous workers.

The inter-agency plan should then identify the scale, location and nature of in-migrant support needs likely over the next five to ten years. This should consider:

o   Housing needs;

o   Need for welcome information;

o   Need for outreach support;

o   Language and translation support;

o   Need to regulate employers and agencies effectively;

o   The plan should also include the (financial) support of integration services for migrants, such as ESOL.

Meeting migrants' needs is a continuous process and needs change over time, and support services and provisions must adapt to such changes. The migration plan needs to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of migrant workers and the Outer Hebrides economy.

Migrant workers need access to a wide range of information on basic services and rights. On arrival in the Outer Hebrides, workers should receive a 'welcome and support' service helping them with 'cultural orientation', as well as more practical information on banking, welfare and employment rights, health and social services, education and leisure and recreation services. This could be in the form of 'online welcome information' provided in a range of languages.

There should also be welcome and support centres, or a scheme of 'migrant outreach workers' should be developed. Ideally, people providing such a service would be fluent in a language often used by migrant workers, as well as being familiar and connected with local public and social services.

Responsibilities of employers in supporting migrant integration should be further emphasised. Already many have taken on major tasks, such as responsibility for housing, and some employers in the Outer Hebrides have also lead by example in other areas. In general, employers should discuss with local agencies any plans for recruiting workers, so as to allow for better planning of these services.

There is also a need for agencies to provide information to communities to help them understand why migrants come, and what role migrants may have at community level, and for the Outer Hebrides in general.

The local media could help to sensitise communities for the new arrivals. This will be particularly important if the number of international migrants are increasing further (and all indicators suggest they will), and if the migrant population is becoming more ethnically diverse (as is likely with future EU expansion). In Portugal, a 'Journalists for Tolerance' campaign contributed to a successful integration of in-migrants into communities.

Responsibility for the successful integration of migrants also rests with countries of origin. For example, consular offices overseas have reached out to migrant communities in countries (such as Ireland) where emigration has a longer history. Such links are likely to emerge soon between the UK and the new accession countries. From the Outer Hebrides perspective, it will be important to ensure that information about the Outer Hebrides is part of any pre-departure and employment orientation. This should include information on the Outer Hebrides' rural characteristics, but also its Gaelic heritage.

Given the difficulties in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision in remote areas, pre-departure orientation should also include language lessons.

Policy context

The Scottish Executive *Fresh Talent* initiative aims to encourage people to consider coming to live and work in Scotland. It fits in very closely with the policy direction suggested by our research for the Outer Hebrides. *Fresh Talent* may also help in providing funding to attract postgraduates from overseas to carry out research at UHI.

9.2.9   Sustaining Gaelic

Most in-migrants' views on Gaelic were very supportive and enthusiastic. In-migrants can contribute to both the sustainability of rural communities and the Gaelic language.

While adults must be given the opportunity to learn Gaelic on arrival in the Outer Hebrides, and to find courses that suit their levels (including advanced), it is clearly the children who are most likely to be able to become speakers at native standard. The importance of Gaelic schools, in which Gaelic is also spoken in the playground, cannot be overestimated.

Policy context

Creating Communities of the future identifies the importance of: a diverse range of quality, modern, social and leisure facilities, with a high value placed on Gaelic culture and heritage.

The *Draft National Gaelic Language Pan* identifies the vision for Gaelic as:

o   the **language of choice** for an ever increasing number of Scots and others,

o   with an expanding core of **mother-tongue speakers**, and

o   with a **dynamic culture** in a diverse language community.

The *Outer Hebrides Cultural Strategy* has a vision which states that by 2020 Gaelic will be in everyday use as a strong community language and will continue to be the cornerstone of the islands unique cultural identity.

9.2.10   Transport

Most transport issues are under the control of the Scottish Executive although Hi-trans have a key role in influencing policy. There are several issues where transport policy can further help to support population growth and stability.

The Air Discount scheme has been a welcome and positive initiative. There is clear evidence that it is enabling residents and leavers to travel to and from the mainland more easily. However it is still too costly for families to travel regularly by air and ferry prices are very high.

Some issues highlighted in our research that could be promoted by local agencies are:

o   Widening the air discount scheme to include routes to Aberdeen;

o   Developing a similar discount scheme for ferry travel; and

o   Looking at the Norwegian model of Road Equivalent Tariff pricing for rural air and ferry services.

Policy context

Creating Communities of the Future identifies a vision in which: communities are globally connected through a high quality transport infrastructure.

Strengthening Island Communities identifies improving transport services as one of the key challenges facing Island communities*.*

9.2.11   Broadband

The current progress on broadband provision has put the Outer Hebrides ahead of many rural areas in terms of coverage. However work should continue to make sure that this advantage is retained and that technologies are in step with new developments (e.g. wireless technologies).

Policy context

Creating Communities of the future identifies a vision in which: communities are globally connected through leading edge communications systems.

Strengthening Island Communities identifies an argument for pioneering new technologies such as Next generation broadband in remote rural areas such as Island communities.

9.2.12   Health and social care

There is a strong demand for health and social care staff and this is likely to increase with the ageing population. This is likely to require in-migrant workers to augment the existing ageing workforce in parts of these sectors. The Comhairle, Western Isles NHS Board and private sector employers should work together to promote caring careers and also plan effectively to attract suitable in-migrant workers.

Policy context

Strengthening Island Communities identifies the need to explore innovative ways of delivering health services adapted to island needs*.*

The *Western Isles Community Plan* identifies: "the creation of a prosperous and healthy community based on the principle of sustainable development through respect for the natural environment and the cultural traditions of the Western Isles."

The Western Isles Community Wellbeing Strategy sets out the aims and objectives of the Well Being Forum to be directed through joint working with partners are:

o   Everyone has access to good food, water, shelter and fuel at a reasonable cost;

o   People's good health is protected through the creation of safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services that emphasise prevention of illness as well as proper care for the sick;

o   Levels of illness and health damaging behaviours are maintained at as low a level as possible;

o   People live without fear of personal violence from crime or persecution because of their personal beliefs, race, gender or sexuality;

o   Everyone has access to and is encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge and information needed to play a full part in society; and

o   Communities and individuals have the confidence to achieve their potential.

9.2.13   Leisure & recreation

Good quality leisure and recreation services are important to sustaining the quality of life that young people aspire to. Recent investments have improved the available provision in Stornoway significantly. There needs to be a range of services and activities that meet the needs of all sectors of society, and particularly:

o   Services and facilities for women;

o   Activities for children; and

o   Services and activities for young people.

There also need to be services available in areas out with Stornoway and particularly focused on the other key population centres around: Balivanich, Tarbert and Castlebay.

Policy context

Creating Communities of the future identifies the importance of: a diverse range of quality, modern, social and leisure facilities, with a high value placed on Gaelic culture and heritage.

Strengthening Island Communities identifies the role of sport and community facilities in raising community confidence and making island communities more attractive to potential migrants.

9.2.14   Arts and culture

A diverse and thriving society need a strong arts and culture programme. The new Arts centre in Stornoway is undoubtedly a key factor in making Stornoway a more attractive place to be.

There is an active arts community in the Islands although they do not always work together effectively. There is greater joint working among the arts and culture sector in the Uists.

Developing the arts sector also provides a significant opportunity for tourism and economic growth.

Policy context

The importance of the arts and cultural sector is reflected in the Cultural and creative industries strategy. This highlights the significant potential for this sector across the Outer Hebrides.

Strengthening Island Communities identifies the role of arts and culture in raising community confidence and making island communities more attractive to potential migrants.

The *Outer Hebrides Cultural Strategy* sets out a vision:

o   To work in partnership to strive for excellence and ensure that culture plays an essential part in creating and sustaining socially and economically healthy island communities, who have the opportunity to participate in and access a diverse range of cultural activities and facilities.

o   That we embrace new technologies to appropriately preserve and provide access to our cultural heritage while nurturing creativity for the benefit of current and future generations.

o   That locally our island communities have a strong sense of their own cultural identity, value their culture both past and present and are aware of its' international significance.

o   That nationally and internationally, the islands are characterised and promoted as a place of inspiration and creativity.

9.2.15   Environment

Sustaining a high quality natural environment should be an ongoing priority for local agencies; particularly given the importance of the environment as a catalyst for in-migration. Protecting key natural and cultural assets should be a fundamental strand in any policies promoting development.

Policy context

Creating Communities of the Future identifies the importance of: a high quality environment which maintains biodiversity.

The *Western Isles Community Plan* identifies: "the creation of a prosperous and healthy community based on the principle of sustainable development through respect for the natural environment and the cultural traditions of the Western Isles."

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9.3 Key policy priorities

Clearly there are limited resources to take action to support population sustainability so it will be important to prioritise actions.

9.3.1 Multi-agency Working Group

The first action should be the formation of a multi-agency working group (possibly a sub-group reporting to the Community Planning Partners). This group should initially look to:

o conduct a review of current (high level) strategies / policies, noting where there is alignment to sustainable population objectives; and identifying potential areas for joint working

o develop an action plan on migration and

o investigate ways of migration proofing policies in the future.

And all the priority actions should be taken forward through meaningful joint working, where each agency adds value to the project.

The initial priorities of these agencies should be:

Developing enterprise

Promoting wider job opportunities through developing enterprise. This should involve proactive work with existing self-employed, bringing in enterprising role models and developing generous incentives to promote enterprise as an option. There should be a specific project targeting women into enterprise.

Key policy recommendations are:

o Carrying out a survey of sole traders and lifestyle entrepreneurs to assess their potential for growth and joint working

o Identifying, and developing a network among, successful entrepreneurs with a local connection to involve in enterprise education

o Developing and seeking funding for a specific programme to get women to start their own businesses

Supporting housing requirements

Supporting the housing requirements of in-migrants and returners through the existing housing strategy and taking forward related construction sector training and growth initiatives. This provides a potential win-win scenario of increasing housing choice as well as providing employment opportunities for stayers and growing the economy.

Key policy recommendations are:

o Developing a construction sector apprenticeship programme linked to the Housing Strategy

o Carrying out research into the growth potential of the indigenous construction sector

- o Developing a schools project to promote the construction sector as a potential business opportunity or career

Supporting growth at UHI

Developing and supporting the growth of UHI at Lews Castle. UHI provides an opportunity to attract back young graduates and professionals to postgraduate research and jobs outside the public sector. At the same time specialist courses can attract students from across the UK. Research projects linked to the environment, energy and health can also create spin-off opportunities for business growth.

Key policy recommendations are:

- o Developing a joint programme of research studentships linked to key economic growth sectors
- o Promoting secondment opportunities to staff in the key public sector agencies
- o Providing practical and in-kind support to assist research projects

Integrating in-migrants

In-migrants will be the mainstay of population and workforce growth in the short to medium term. It will be important that they continue to view the Outer Hebrides as a welcoming place with future potential. Agencies will need to develop joint support services to help in-migrants to integrate effectively into their jobs and communities. These measures should also include awareness raising, capacity building and support for existing communities to help them with the process of integration.

Key policy recommendations are:

- o Developing a welcome pack for migrants in web-based and hard copy format that provides information and orientation on employment and welfare issues
- o Recruiting migrant outreach workers to act as intermediaries between workers and agencies
- o Assessing the current and future training needs of migrant workers, including ESOL, ICT and vocational training needs

Engaging young people and out-migrants

Engaging young people and out-migrants will be key to either retaining them or attracting them back. Hebrideans have a strong emotional bond with 'home' and agencies need to make sure that they are able to get involved in decision-making and wider community life. Giving young people a stake in local decision-making will increase their sense of connection to the Islands and make it more likely that they will return after their education. Developing facilities that are attractive to women and young families will also be important in retaining young people and families with children. Out-migrants also need to access practical information on jobs, housing, transport, events and other news. The internet provides clear opportunities to improve connections between the community on and off the Islands.

Key policy recommendations are:

- o Improving access to information on the islands and job opportunities for those who have left through developing an online website such as www.workhebrides.com

- Investigating the feasibility of providing graduates with incentives to take up jobs in key sectors or start up businesses. These might include subsidised housing, help with student loan repayment and direct grants

- Increasing civic engagement with young people before they leave by building on existing initiatives such as the Hebrides Youth Parliament

- Engaging with local media and developing methods for promote positive messages and good news from the Outer Hebrides

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Appendix B - Some examples of experience elsewhere

Different policy and practice approaches

Worldwide, developed countries have adopted a variety of different approaches to the issue of rural depopulation. Two contrasting examples of this are Australia and Norway. Australian policies have in some instances followed the 'free market' approach, and any support that has been given to rural areas has generally been by way of accelerating what is seen as inevitable change; for example, in recognition of the trend towards larger agricultural units, incentives have been offered to families wishing to leave the industry, thus allowing smaller farms to be amalgamated. This inevitably leads to a loss of jobs and thus population in rural areas, with consequences for service provision. It could be argued that such an approach enhances the competitiveness of the industry, at the expense of rural communities themselves (Alston 2000).

By contrast, in Norway, it has long been recognised that policies addressing remote areas (whether rural or not) must act by positively discriminating, and that since being remote is not a temporary state, programs need to be permanent in nature. Examples of support include grants and loans for businesses, and reduced personal and business taxation for the most remote areas (Mønnesland 2001).

Policies within the EU tend to follow the supportive rather than the free-market approach, confirmed by recent changes to the Common Agricultural Policy which have 'decoupled' support from production. The emphasis of these changes has been generally an environmental one, whilst rural development remains something of a peripheral issue. As a means of income support for the agricultural sector, the CAP pays out according to farm size (or, in the past, output) rather than on a personal basis, and as such is not a particularly effective means of supporting rural jobs (Allanson 2006).

Within the Hebrides, there have been projects which have attempted to promote job vacancies to potential returners, including the 'Thig Air Ais' project in Skye (Henderson and Shucksmith 1997). A more radical approach would be to make deductions from student loan repayments for every year that a graduate spends working in a remote area; this policy has been used in certain parts of Norway, alongside favourable taxation measures (Mønnesland 2001). Such policies could help mitigate the higher costs of living in remote areas.

A Canadian research project is noteworthy which was supported by the Canadian Rural Partnership. It elicited from young people those key actions which would make them more likely to remain in or return to their rural communities. A summary of the research report (Malatest et al 2002) is set out below, as many of the identified issues seem to be also relevant for the context of the Outer Hebrides. They may provide a good basis on which to build initiatives.

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Key actions which would make young people more likely to remain or return to rural communities suggested by Canadian youth
"Enhancing Employment Opportunities
- Have education and training institutions provide greater access to technical/trades training.
- Have local employers provide youth employment/entry into career positions.
- Have school districts/colleges/local economic development agencies build an awareness of self-employment as a career alternative.
- Provide allowances or stipends to allow/support rural youth to attend training or networking sessions that they might otherwise be unable to attend.
- Encourage employers to make available summer employment opportunities to help retain ties with the community among those youth who have left to pursue post-secondary education.

Facilitating Access to Education and Training
- Provide post-secondary education options to rural youth.
- Promote awareness of the importance of technology to local teachers and to "community influencers".
- Make computers with high speed Internet available to rural youth enrolled in distance education.
- Have school districts/colleges/local economic development agencies build an awareness of distance education options.
- Promote group enrolment in distance education courses to facilitate learning for rural youth.
- Provide grants or interest-free loans to support rural youth in attending training sessions that teach skills needed in the rural community

Civic Engagement
- Encourage local governments to adopt a pro-active approach to include rural youth in the decision-making process through several avenues.
- Encourage rural communities to make greater efforts to publicize youth issues, activities and strategies.
- Encourage local governments to identify youth initiatives as a priority in community plans and strategies.
- Encourage local governments/communities to work together to develop strategies to engage rural youth.

Tax and Fiscal Policy
- Have provincial and federal governments review the opportunity to adjust student loan repayment requirements for youth who reside in rural areas upon completion of their studies.
- Encourage local governments to examine the feasibility of offering reduced property tax assessments for youth (first time home-buyers).
- Have all levels of government explore possible fiscal/tax strategies that would encourage industry to locate to rural areas and hire rural youth.

Work Orientation/Rural "Exposure" Programs
- Encourage employers in rural communities to establish "work experience" programs to encourage job seekers to acquire work experience/familiarization in rural communities. This activity could also be partially funded through local community economic development offices and/or other agencies.
- Encourage local businesses to recognize the importance of youth business and establish minimum targets for youth business contracts (e.g., 5% of contracts to go to youth-run businesses).
- Have the school districts and local employers work closely together to provide work experience opportunities for youth in local industry.
- Promote the advantages of rural living.

Recreation/Social Activities and Infrastructure
- Ensure that Community Recreation Plans explicitly address the needs of local youth groups including the 15 to 19 year age group and single young adults aged 20 to 29 years.
- Encourage rural communities to explore the availability of government funding (e.g., Canadian Heritage, other) to support cultural/social infrastructure or events in their local community."

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Ireland

Area Development Management (ADM) Pilot Rural Development Programme

The ADM Pilot Programme was established in 1998, and by January 1999, nine pilot action research projects were operating. Each of those had an expected duration of one year. The aim of the Programme was to gain an understanding of rural resettlement processes, and thereby feed into a strategic approach to address the issues involved. The pilot projects focused on the following key elements in their efforts to formulate a managed repopulation model:

o Identifying target groups, that is families wishing to move to the rural areas;

o Identifying target areas using various locale relevant indicators of non-sustainability to identify destinations where the families could move to;

o Sourcing/obtaining housing for relocating families;

o Providing extensive before and after relocation support with both migrants and host communities;

o Using key resources such as technology and/or employment creation as a leverage for attracting potential new residents

o The provision of a dedicated worker (Rural Resettlement Officer) in each of the pilot projects to establish contacts and working relationships with local actors, ensure animation of the local community and assist in the formulation, implementation and management of an appropriate repopulation model." (

The projects were to involve all relevant stakeholders and local actors, including local community representatives, Health Board, Local Authority and potentially relocating families).

The impact of the ADM Pilot Programme has been assessed as "extremely positive" with a recorded 57 families relocating to the project areas. For more information, see:

http://www.pobal.ie/media/TheMissingPeople.pdf

Rural resettlement Ireland

Since 1990, the voluntary organisation Rural Resettlement Ireland based in Co. Clare has assisted families to leave cities, and resettle permanently in rural areas. Priority is given to families with young children. Field officers provide help with finding private rented housing, and offer advice in many other relevant areas such as schooling and transport.

http://www.ruralresettlement.com/

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Germany

"Wir...hier und jetzt" (Us...here and now")

Germany's programme „*Wir...hier und jetzt*" („us...now and here"), initiatied by the federal Department for Families, Seniors, Women and Youth, aimed to assist youth in the *Neue Bundesländer* (the new Laender) in their search for employment and job prospects. It also endeavoured to strengthen young people's relationship with the region to prevent out-migration. The project operated over 15 months (until the end of 2004), providing smaller sums of money for regional projects.

It involved nearly 13,000 youths from the five *Länder* in over 400 projects, of which each received funding between Euro 3500 – 7500. Local actors, such as youth welfare institutes, schools, job centres, churches, clubs and representatives from the local economy were involved. Hence, organisations were included whose primary focus had never been on youth work. The initiative thereby developed structures and networks which could be sustained beyond the funding period of many projects (DJI, 2005).

The evaluation of the initiative produced the following findings:

o   Local youthwork has been strengthened, and most importantly, has been initiated by youth themselves.

o   Those youth who participated in projects which explored local and regional history felt that the ties with their local area had been reinforced, and a significantly greater sense of identity had been created.

o   In some localities, new collaborations between youth agencies and other actors emerged. For example, a non-governmental youth agency collaborated with a development agency and the regional employers' association to engage youth at an early age in ideas around entrepreneurship. A network has now been established which will help in the long term to prepare young adults for the requirements of entrepreneurship.

o   New marketing concepts have been developed to promote existing attractive leisure facilities for youth. This will sustain what is in offer even if financial support is diminishing. For example, an adventure park could be maintained through the collaboration between a regional marketing agency and a travel agency. (DJI, 2005)

However, the programme had also some weaknesses. Its wide remit made it difficult to market it effectively as it was not immediately obvious what the initiative could offer in terms of structures and project themes. It was recommended that future initiatives should be more clearly defined in terms of their structures and contents. (DJI, 2005)

MV4You

The government of the *Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) (MVP) focuses on migrants who have left the area. It supports the agency "MV4You" whose express aim is to entice migrants with educational qualifications obtained outside MWP back into their *Heimat* (homeland), using emotive terms to strengthen the appeal. Having adopted the motto *Wandern und Wiederkommen* (Migrating and Returning), MV4You functions as an internet based

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network within which employers and potential returners can exchange information about existing employment opportunities. Primary target groups of the agency are management and highly qualified personnel. By registering with MV4You, a well skilled or qualified migrant indicates their interest in returning if an appropriate employment opportunity arises.

The aim of the initiative is not to prevent someone from leaving. In fact, experiencing life and work elsewhere is seen as positive, but it is regarded as problematic when people do not return. Hence, the emphasis is placed on ensuring contact is kept with the home region, information provided about possible opportunities, and a return facilitated when the time is right. Regular news are provided about the home region, the labour market situation, cultural and other events - all tailored to the personal profile of the migrant. (MV4You, undated)

Canada

Place aux Jeunes (PaJ)

PaJ has been developed, run and refined over a period of more than 15 years. The programme is about bringing young people back to their rural regions in the important context of community capacity building. PaJ projects take place in communities where stakeholders have agreed on the importance of addressing the rural youth exodus, and where communities are prepared to act, thereby ensuring sustainable development. The project rests on the recognition that youth tend to leave initially to search for independence (the most important reason) or to study, and in fewer cases to work or to join a spouse. However, initial migration does not constitute the end of young people's mobility, and in most cases, an interest in their home region continues.

The goal of PaJ is "to *make young people aware of the potential of the regions* and the *socio-economic networks* and *individuals leading them*. Better informed of the *business opportunities, actual job opportunities* and *general living conditions* in these regions, more young people open their eyes and hearts to those regions. Some even create *regional businesses that benefit them and their communities*. The services provided by PAJ projects are aimed at regional and urban youth who have completed or are in the process of completing university, college or vocational training programs and who are interested in moving to the regions." (PaJ, undated, original emphases)

The key objectives of PaJ are cited as follows:

o "Prevent and stem the exodus of young people to major urban centres

o Foster and promote the social involvement of young people in the regions

o Promote and facilitate the occupational integration of young people in the regions

o Make young people, their friends and families and local stakeholders aware of the impact of the exodus

o Stimulate regional business creation" (PaJ, undated)

For more information (only available in French), see: http://www.placeauxjeunes.qc.ca/fr/

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Title	Outer Hebrides Migration Study
Version	Final report
Date	December 2006

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