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## 1. SUMMARY

**1.1** The most recent meeting of the Economy Thematic Group took place on 29 February and this report provides a summary of the key issues covered. The group remains focussed on identifying issues affecting the local economy and measures which enable changes to be identified and tracked or treated as appropriate.

## 2. KEY ISSUES

### 2.1 Housing.

Two presentations one from the Local Authority perspective and one by West Highland Housing Association highlighted a number of housing issues facing the Argyll economy. It was noted that without a change in legislation priority is given on the basis of housing need even if the applicant comes from outwith the area and not on the basis of local need.

**2.2 Performance Measurement.** The revised scorecard was accepted and it was agreed that a small working group would finalise the success measures document which had been tabled. The principle behind the measures chosen remains the wish to be able to balance the monitoring of partner interventions whilst using the figures as a barometer of the local economy.

**2.3 Bute.** Partners were advised that the Management Committee had endorsed the use of a wider partnership approach as a pilot to address the challenges on Bute. Invitations to participate in a small working party are being sent to a number of partners and a full report on progress will be available at the next meeting.

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**2.4 Modern Apprenticeships** Skills Development Scotland provided figures on participation levels in Modern Apprenticeships across Argyll. It was noted that positive outcomes across the area at 64% are below both the Scottish national and Highlands and Islands figures. Gender split was also noted as of 330 Modern Apprentices in March 2011 only 78 were female.

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**2.5 Rural Broadband.** This is recognised as being a key factor for future success in the rural economy but there is concern that costs appear to be growing. A detailed report from Gerry Wilson had been tabled for the meeting and it was noted that as HIE is leading on the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) project Stuart Robertson of HIE would be visiting Argyll on 23 March and an update will be provided at the next Thematic Group meeting .

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**2.6 Third Sector and public sector joint working.** A presentation was given to demonstrate the potential for Argyll and Bute Local Services Initiative (ABLSI) to identify service areas where there is a real potential for the public sector in Argyll and Bute to work with the third sector to determine ways to improve the quality of services while also achieving efficiencies.

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### **3 FUTURE MEETINGS**

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It was agreed that the format of future Economy Thematic Group will be reviewed by the Chair and the Thematic Lead with a view to increasing participation from business and promoting cross partner working.

The date of the next Economy Thematic Group meeting is still to be confirmed

For further information contact: Douglas Cowan  
[douglas.cowan@hient.co.uk](mailto:douglas.cowan@hient.co.uk)

Telephone 01546 605402