POPGROUP Users Group (Scotland)

Minutes of the POPGROUP Users Group Meeting – 25 January 2012, National Records of Scotland (NRS), Ladywell House, Edinburgh

Present:

Paula Argo	Aberdeenshire Council
Andrew Ballingall	Fife Council
Chris Carr	Argyll & Bute Council
Allison Craig	North Ayrshire Council
Jan Freeke	Glasgow City Council
Alan MacGregor	Glasgow City Council
Alistair Harvey	City of Edinburgh Council
Allan Lambie	South Lanarkshire Council
Adele Trainer	North Lanarkshire Council
Martin Malcolm	Western Isles NHS Board (for item 3 onwards)
Pete Boden	Edge Analytics
John McCarthy	Edge Analytics
Harvey Snowling	National Records of Scotland (NRS), Chair
Esta Clark	NRS, Minutes
Esther Roughsedge	NRS
Valerie Hale	NRS
Keira Murray	NRS

1.   Welcome and introductions

1.1 Harvey Snowling welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the POPGROUP Users Group in Scotland and everyone introduced themselves. Apologies were received from Cameron Thomas and Paul Davison.

2.   Previous minutes and action points

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as accurate. All the actions were completed, or were items on the agenda. Most of the actions in Ludi Simpson's annex to the minutes would be covered under Pete Boden's presentation.

Action	Outcome
Ludi to report back to edge Analytics about this problem.	**Complete:** the issue with Excel 2007 and Excel 2010 were reported and a work around is now available to download on the POPGROUP website.
NRS (formerly GROS) to investigate whether Census household headship rates and communal establishment population counts can be made available to POPGROUP users.	**Complete**: the data was sent to Ludi and is available on request from NRS Customer Services.
All group members to report any sections of the user guidance that could be improved.	On the agenda.

Group members to let NRS (formerly GROS) know if they are interested in getting some training (general POPGROUP training, refresher, or Derived Forecast).	**Complete**: From the replies received it was difficult to identify a training event which would be relevant for the wide range of experience of this forum. Pete Boden reported that training run by POPGROUP and Local Government Association (LGA) would be more varied and frequent in the future, driven by what people want.
Group members to suggest alternative ways of sharing POPGROUP knowledge.	**Complete**: Pete said that Edge Analytics run a helpline which provides additional guidance.

3. POPGROUP/Derived Forecast developments

3.1 Pete Boden presented the developments in the software since the last time the group had met. He explained the context of how POPGROUP, HOUSEGROUP and Derived Forecast were used by Local Authorities in England and Wales. Local Authorities were now doing more demographic work in England and Wales due to a change in the planning process. Pete also summarised his and Edge Analytics background and the background to POPGROUP, the role of the LGA and gave some examples of user issues in England and Wales.

3.2 The main developments Pete outlined for the derived forecast software was the facility to link directly through the derived forecast model to the population age and sex structures e.g. applying headship or economic rates to the population to produce different types of projections. Projections of Long-term Limiting Illness can be run based on work by Alan Marshall from Manchester University. Pete also reported that Ludi Simpson is consulting on POPGROUP version 4 which will include technical developments in projection methods and also developments in the usability of the software.

3.3 There was a discussion around the use of household headship rates in projections and the different approaches used by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and NRS and the use of 'flattened' headship rates and constraining to available council tax data on households. Pete noted that NRS's approach to household projections by constraining to council tax data was better than methods used elsewhere to produce official estimates.

3.4 Pete then showed how Cardiff and Essex had produced various projections using the software to help in their planning processes.

4. POPGROUP/Derived Forecast demonstration

4.1 Next Pete gave a demonstration of the derived forecast software. At the end of the demonstration Harvey asked how is the derived forecast process different from HOUSEGROUP. Pete said that the derived forecast method was different and it is easier to use than HOUSEGROUP as it can apply different types of rates directly to population figures. Esther Roughsedge then asked about future plans for the use of household headship rates. Pete said that were no plans to change them until the 2011 Census results are available and this would then potentially give three data points in time to look at.

4.2 Jan Freeke asked about when the data modules would be available for the 2010-based projections. Esta Clark said that the population projections would be published at the end of February and Esther said that the household projections would be published in

May. Pete said that the data modules for POPGROUP/HOUSEGROUP and Derived Forecast would be available about two months after these dates.

4.3 The group then discussed adding constraints into models, especially at small geographies as trend projections often had people either moving into one small area which was not realistically sustainable. Harvey asked if the model could apply capacity constraints in certain areas and then move the excess into neighbouring areas. Pete replied that lots of people have asked that question and the constraint option does not do that at the moment, it was difficult to do and is being considered as part of POPGROUP version 4 developments.

4.4 Jan asked Pete about where the activity rates used came from. Pete said that users had to derive these for themselves but data was available on the NOMIS website. Esta suggested checking with the Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics team to see if they could help.

5. User Presentation – Glasgow Community Planning Partnership Projections

5.1 Jan Freeke presented work he had carried out a couple of years ago to produce projections for Glasgow Community Planning Partnership areas using POPGROUP and HOUSEGROUP and explained that he would be updating the projections later this year.

5.2 There was then a discussion around the data feeding into the model and the different options. Jan confirmed that the results of his projections are on the Glasgow City Council website and they would probably be updated later this year depending on the timings of the local elections.

6. Summary from all users of work they have been doing

6.1 Next Harvey invited everyone to share their experiences of using POPGROUP and HOUSEGROUP.

6.2 Alistair Harvey said that he was planning to do Multi Member Wards (MMW) projections for areas in the City Edinburgh Council area. He had been using the method outlined in the user guide on the NRS website to estimate small area migration and on the whole the process had worked quite well except in a couple of areas. Pete asked what starting population had been used and Alistair replied NRS estimates. He said that he had done something similar to Jan in using a housing constraint and that migration had been controlled to the NRS total for Edinburgh.

6.3 Andrew Ballingall informed the group that they had updated the work carried out for them by Ludi Simpson and had produced various scenarios. Some areas had shown big growths and areas with students were problematic. He had used a house building constraint for planning purposes. Fife's social work department were interested in the model for estimates of those of working age for planning their services. They may do a 2010-based set though this would depend on the timing of the census data release.

6.4 Martin Malcolm explained that he had just got a licence for the software and was planning to run scenarios for disease and morbidity trend based projections. Pete said that the derived forecast model was a fantastic way of creating incidence rates and population scenarios in that context.

6.5 Adele Trainer talked through her plans to update the work they had carried out for MMW, housing market areas and social work areas. She was planning to work with preschool planning colleagues looking at catchment area projections for three and four year olds.

6.6 Allan Lambie stated that he had re-run his model for the 2008-based community area projections and had got odd results for some small areas but then ran the projections for four areas and this smoothed out some of the anomalies.

6.7 Paula Argo mentioned the work she had done about 12 to 15 months ago for Structure Plan areas in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire using different migration scenarios.

6.8 Allison Craig said that she had been slower to get off the ground than she had hoped and asked about the available input data for models. She was slowly working her way though the user guidance on the NRS website and was looking to produce projections for MMW in North Ayrshire. She mentioned the issue of Islands being included in datazones which covered parts of the mainland.

6.9 Chris Carr reported that she had not done much projection work in the past year but had produced two set of projections in the past, and may be helping education colleagues in their planning process.

7. Discussion of any technical/methodology/data issues

7.1 Harvey led this item asking for everyone to share any technical or data issues they had come across. The characteristics of the available data on births and deaths was discussed and Harvey explained that this data could provide more detail e.g. age of mother and was available, on request. Data for 2009/10 is now available.

7.2 Andrew noted that it was a lot of work to get the rates and input data in the right format to put into POPGROUP.

8. Feedback on user guidance on the NRS website

8.1 Harvey asked for feedback on the user guidance on the NRS website for POPGROUP, HOUSEGROUP and Derived Forecast. The group feedback was that the user guidance had been very useful to use along with the larger POPGROUP manuals.

9. Any other business

9.1 Jan asked if the Long-Term Illness function in Derived Forecast was widely used in England and Wales. Pete said that it was and projections had been produced for all districts including Scottish local authorities and there were plans to update this work when results from the 2011 Census become available. Jan also asked if POPGROUP was widely used in health boards. Pete replied that there are not many users of POPGROUP in health areas and at the moment due to changes in England and Wales it was difficult to know who would be interested in using it.

9.2 It was agreed that this format of meeting had been useful for those attending and it was agreed to hold another one perhaps when version 4 of POPGROUP is released.

9.3 Martin Malcolm asked about the availability of training in Scotland for POPGROUP. Harvey replied that due to the wide range of experience it was difficult to organise one event to fit all needs. There are the standard POPGROUP training events in Manchester, usually held in May.

9.4 Harvey thanked everyone for coming and for their valuable input to the meeting.