

MINUTES OF THE POPULATION PROJECTIONS WORKING GROUP: 31 May 2006**Present:**

Esta Clark	GROS (Chair)
Jenny Boag	Falkirk Council
Richard Belding	Aberdeenshire Council
Jan Freeke	Glasgow City Council
Alistair Harvey	City of Edinburgh Council
Chris Carr	Argyll & Bute Council
Jillian Evans	NHS Grampian
Jamie Jenkins	Welsh Assembly Government
Cameron Thomas	Highland Council
Allan Lambie	South Lanarkshire Council
Jack Winchester	Aberdeen City Council
Stuart Booker	Fife Council
Lesley Mann	North Lanarkshire Council
David Hurst	Scottish Executive
Cecilia Macintyre	GROS
Esther Roughsedge	GROS
Bryan Cunningham	GROS (Secretary)

1. Introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from Richard Pereira (Office for National Statistics - ONS), Chris Shaw (ONS) and Ed Turnbull (GROS).

1.2 The chair, Esta Clark welcomed everyone to the first Population Projections Working Group (PPWG) meeting. She noted that a few apologies had been received and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Draft Remit and Membership – PPWG (06) 01

2.1 Cecilia Macintyre presented this item. She explained that the work on National Projections was carried out by ONS by Chris Shaw and that sub-national work for England was carried out by Richard Pereira also of ONS. The next set of National Projections would be published in October 2007, with a consultation exercise likely in July 2007. Currently, sub-national projections for Scotland are planned for late 2007 early 2008. A draft remit and membership was outlined. The work will mostly be done in-house, but a small amount of money is available to assist in carrying out research for this review. Cecilia also noted the close links this working group will have with the Household Analysis Review Group (HARG). Comments were sought on the PPWG remit and membership.

2.2 Cameron Thomas stated that he thought there was a need for projections to be produced which were based on the 'economic climate'. He added that there was a need for stability in the projections baseline from one set to the next and that they should be free from political meddling. Jenny Boag added that the GROS projections were based on past trends and wondered if the public were aware of this and that some local authorities produced their own projections. Cecilia Macintyre reiterated that sub-national projections were controlled to the GAD figures which are trend based and the 2004-based projections

use a 10 year average of 4,000 for the long-term migration assumptions. David Hurst mentioned that the grant aided expenditure (GAE) calculation used the most recent projections.

2.3 Allan Lambie thought that annual projections may offer more stability. Jenny Boag noted that a precedent had been made when the 2003-based projections were published meaning that yearly figures could be available. Richard Belding added that yearly figures were available in the 1970's. Jenny Boag commented that annual projections would be useful when there are sudden changes in population. Cecilia Macintyre added that in theory GROS could produce sub-national projections on a yearly basis, but that national projections would not be available to control the results to. She mentioned that the National Projection process included a four month consultation period which was one of the reasons the projections were carried out every two years. Jan Freeke mentioned that there could still be problems with annual figures as these would still include the 'five year' average at the sub-national level, which would mean that migration could go up as well as down.

2.4 Richard Belding informed the group that the 1994-based projections were "based on an analysis of recent trends in migration, but also take account of various factors such as economic prospects and official development plans that seem likely to affect population distribution" so at some point GROS had changed its method. Richard Belding added that there needs to be robustness in the projections, therefore there was a need to look at the input data i.e. 5 year migration might fluctuate drastically and there might be a need to look at other data. This would mean that the users of projection data wouldn't need to change their plans as often. Cecilia will seek the views of the SE planning department.

2.5 Jan Freeke moved on to add that there was a certain amount of optimism used in structure plans. Jenny Boag added that year on year changes in migration which might be against recent trends, should be taken into account in the projections. She stated that the 2004-based projections are already out-of-date because she knew of a large influx of migrants into the Falkirk area recently. Stuart Booker added that GROS should introduce 'economic cycle' changes into the projections, since accession states new to the EU in the future may change the projections, of course some issues you can't take account of, especially in projections for the longer term. Jenny Boag suggested more information about the influx from EU accession state migrants should be inserted into the remit of the group. Cecilia pointed out that figures on accession state migration would be very problematic, but that ONS were leading work into quantifying short-term migrants. Cecilia asked members if any one else should come along to the PPWG meetings. Jenny Boag suggested that academics like Allan Findlay, Paul Boyle etc could be invited, since they will offer slightly different viewpoints.

2.6 Jan Freeke asked what GROS was doing regarding the 'economic' side of projections because at the moment it was being avoided and it is very important. Cecilia said that she would need to check with Chris Shaw at ONS because of the current national context of the projections and also with colleagues in the Scottish Executive and then provide an update to members.

Action: Cecilia Macintyre (GROS)

2.7 Jamie Jenkins informed members that ONS had produced regional based projections for Wales but they hadn't been published. Richard Belding mentioned that during the consultation process councils are asked to comment on past trends rather than future trends in migration. Jenny Boag asked if there were any plans to test the accuracy

of past projections to see how accurate these have been, say 1970's to present. Esta Clark replied that she had looked at the accuracy of past projections at Scotland level and planned to look at the sub-national projections compared with mid-year estimates at Council level as part of this review. Jan Freeke added that members should consider the role of GROS and local authorities in the projections process. Allan Lambie suggested that more detailed information for local authorities should be published, rather than a 'neutral' set as at present.

2.8 Esta Clark thanked everyone for their detailed discussion and said that the revised remit of the working group will be circulated to members in due course and would be finalised through correspondence.

Action: Esta Clark (GROS)

3. Round table discussion on the requirement and use of projections, plus any other issues

3.1 The group were asked for their views on their requirements and uses of projections. Jillian Evans said that it would be helpful to review the accuracy of past projections at Local Authority level to assess their reliability which may inform the future methodology. Richard Belding added that projections must reflect what is expected to happen rather than past trends which can cause fluctuations from year-to-year. Richard would like projections to reflect economic trends i.e. Aberdeen City's oil/gas industry. He stated that if this was taken into account this would rid the councils of some work. Richard asked why the methodology has changed since the 1994-based projections and said that he used POP GROUP and would like GROS to give the same amount of support to councils as they do in England & Wales for POP GROUP. Allan Lambie would like the input data for the system to be added to the GROS website along with extracts of CHI data. Cecilia said that the raw CHI data could not be put on the website because of disclosure issues.

3.2 Cecilia then asked members for their views on the geography used in the projections. Allan Lambie and Leslie Mann both commented that they would like information on old district areas. Jenny Boag commented that she has been bringing up her requirement for old district estimates and projections at PAMS since 1996 and would like old districts to be published again, as they were extremely useful. Cameron Thomas added that he uses the NOR POP package to produce his own projections for these areas and considered the datazone SAPE level geography useful for his analysis. Cecilia said that geography plans would be considered and circulated to members for comment in due course as part of this review.

Action: Cecilia Macintyre (GROS)

3.3 Jack Winchester suggested the need for forecasts to build in the needs of users. Jenny Boag would like economic factors to be built in and take off the constraints to enable 'bottom-up' projections. Jillian Evans added that it may be possible to standardise/review the methods used to project, emphasising the importance of a broad methodology as they affect resource allocations to councils and health boards. David Hurst informed members that the GAE will be produced in late 2007 and the most recent projections available at that time would be used.

3.4 Jack Winchester added that people at Aberdeen City council were very concerned about the 2004-based population projections released in late 2005. He emphasised that

population projections are used by the public as a way they foresee an area and said that the use of more optimistic projections should be used.

3.5 Jan Freeke added that another method should be considered for adjusting mortality by age band.

3.6 Esta Clark thanked everyone for their contribution and said that further comments by email were welcome.

4. Current method and demo of system – Presentation, PAMS (03) 10 & PAMS (06) 02

4.1 Esta Clark presented an overview of the projection system currently used by GROS, including the National and Sub-national projections methods and a demonstration of the current system. Esta asked members if they had any questions and she agreed to circulate a copy of the presentation to group members.

Action: Esta Clark (GROS)

4.2 Jack Winchester asked how the International Passenger Survey (IPS) results were allocated to each local authority. Esta Clark explained that the method to produce migration estimates (which the assumptions for the projections are based on) takes the IPS plus other information from the Home Office and ONS and it is proportioned to Council areas using the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR). Esta added that a review of international migration was carried out by ONS and this was part of the Improving Migration and Population Statistics (IMPS) project also lead by ONS. Esta said that Cecilia Macintyre sat on the 'Implementation of the National Statistics Quality Review on International Migration' project board. Jenny Boag asked that a note be circulated with GROS's ideas to improving the method and system and then ask members to comment. Alistair Harvey then offered to put together and circulate a questionnaire to local authority users about their requirements, since a similar exercise has been carried out for the household projections working group.

Action: Esta Clark (GROS) & Alistair Harvey (City of Edinburgh Council)

5. Paper from the Welsh Assembly on their plans – PPWG (06) 03

5.1 Jamie Jenkins presented this item which gave an overview of the Welsh Assembly's plans for producing population projections for areas within Wales. He added that there was interest in these from a variety of sources and pointed out that a number of local authorities are smaller than those in England. He also pointed out that migration growth in Wales can be linked to house prices, since in the last ten years most migrants moved into the cheaper end of the housing market. He concluded that after consultation with users the 'bottom up' approach will be used by Wales and a meeting is arranged for next week (w/c 5 June 2006) with their 22 local authorities to discuss the best way forward. Jamie asked members if they had any questions.

5.2 Jan Freeke asked if ONS were no longer producing projections for Wales. Jamie Jenkins replied that projections would be produced 'in-house' or commissioned by WAG. Cecilia Macintyre asked how an agreement is reached for the migration assumptions. Jamie Jenkins replied that the 22 local authorities would be consulted after migration flows

were agreed into the 4 regions of Wales. He added that meetings were taking place at the moment but projections would not be available until late 2007.

5.3 Stuart Booker asked for clarification on the 'propensity to migrate' model. Jamie Jenkins briefly outlined the uses of the model saying that it is what ONS currently use and stressed that this method is not used for the distribution of international migrants. He added that Wales are given a figure by ONS and agreement takes place about where the migrants are distributed.

5.4 Jan Freeke asked if Wales produce household projections at the same time as producing population projections. Jamie Jenkins replied that they were in early stages of discussions and no decisions have yet been made.

5.5 Jack Winchester asked how Wales take account of 'declining' areas. Jamie Jenkins replied that they produce a model for the four regions in Wales and leave the decision of the proportions of the populations up to the local authorities in these regions. He reiterated that Wales are in the process of producing regional population projections.

5.6 Esta Clark thanked Jamie for his very useful paper.

6. The way forward

6.1 Cecilia Macintyre gave members some background to the transfer of the national population projections work to ONS from GAD on 31 January 2006 and the setting up of the new National Statistics Centre for Demography (NSCD). She explained that the NSCD was set up by Len Cook (the former National Statistician and Registrar General for England & Wales). The Registrar General, Duncan Macniven, sits on a UK population committee which will discuss the way forward for demographic statistics and that governance arrangements are still being discussed.

6.2 Jamie Jenkins stressed that the key approach to population projections is that all constituent countries do the same thing. He added that ONS do not really work as closely with policy as we do in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

6.3 Cecilia Macintyre said that the ideas put forward at today's meeting will be taken away and fed into the GROS work plan for this review. She added that the plan will include a timetable and it was hoped to circulate this in three/four weeks time for comment. She concluded that GROS would stick to an independent approach to the production of population projections and may consider modifying the present system to incorporate 'economic' factors in the migration phase but would consult colleagues in the SE and ONS for their views.

Action: Esta Clark (GROS)

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Cameron Thomas said that the RAS principle should be looked at as part of the review, as he thought it had caused problems with Highland's sex distribution. Stuart Booker said that there were at least two other more complicated methods which may be worth looking at. Esta Clark said that she hoped to look at the method of controlling to national figures as part of the review.

7.2 Jan Freeke asked what GROS were doing to support councils that do not have demographic expertise. Jan stressed that GROS must look at the support given to councils in this review. Cecilia said this was part of the review. When asked, Jamie Jenkins explained, that of the local authorities who produced their own projections in England & Wales, he thought there was a 50/50 split of local authorities using POP GROUP and CPHM. Esta Clark said that these comments would be taken on board and included in the remit of the group.

Action: Esta Clark (GROS)

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 There was a discussion about when the next meeting should take place. It was agreed that this would take place in six to eight weeks. The secretary will consult members in due course.