

HOUSEHOLD ANALYSES REVIEW GROUP:

Minutes for the meeting of March 9th 2001
Conference Room 7 Victoria Quay, 2-4 pm.

Present:

Duncan Gray (Chairman)	Scottish Executive Development Department Economic Advice & Statistics Division
Stevan Croasdale	Scottish Executive Development Department Economic Advice & Statistics Division
Helen Curry	Scottish Executive Development Department Planning Services Division
Ruth Dundas	Scottish Homes, Scottish House Condition Survey Team
Stephen Fraser	North Ayrshire Council (also representing SCAG)
Jan Freeke	Glasgow City Council
Alistair Harvey	City of Edinburgh Council
Craig McCorrison	West Lothian Council
Caroline Moore	Stirling Council
Derek Neill	North Lanarkshire Council
Deborah Pegg	Scottish Executive Development Department Economic Advice & Statistics Division
Tom Snowling	Aberdeen City Council

AGENDA ITEM 1: INTRODUCTIONS

1. Duncan Gray welcomed members of the group to the meeting, and promised that there would be a steady work programme, for the re-convened group throughout this year and next. He envisaged the work of the group to be ongoing. There then followed brief introductions by each group member.

AGENDA ITEM 2: REMIT, MEMBERSHIP AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS (PAPER 2001/1)

2. Duncan Gray summarised paper 2001/1 and asked if the members of the group agreed with the proposed scope, purpose and broad remit. He noted that there are both technical and strategic aspects the Scottish Executive, must consider in producing Household Statistics. He commented that he felt that these two should be kept separate and concluded that this group should focus on the technical aspects. The Scottish Executive, Scottish Homes and other interested parties' strategic requirements could be addressed at a possible one-off seminar. Craig McCorrison asked if it was felt that the Scottish Executive should continue to produce household estimates and projections on a Local Authority basis, or should we be going to a more detailed geographical level?. **Duncan Gray replied that this could be something that the group could investigate under the proposed remit.**

2.1 Concerning group membership Stephen Fraser asked if Structure Plan Team members ought to be invited, **Duncan Gray agreed that this would be acceptable.** **Stephen Fraser [Action] agreed to propose a representative of structure plan teams whom we could invite to future meetings.** Craig McCorrison felt that due to the heavy use of population statistics somebody from the GROS should be considered, Deborah Pegg commented that Garnett Compton of the GROS had already seen the papers for the current meeting and would be happy to attend meetings if invited. Tom Snowling asked if representatives from the house building companies would be invited. Duncan Gray felt that there could be consultation with house builders but on a more strategic level. Helen Curry added that her contacts within the Scottish House Builders Association (SHBA) were comfortable with the technical detail and were likely to be willing to be involved. Tom Snowling and Stephen Fraser felt that the involvement, either on a consultation basis or as an additional member, would be important for the accountability of the group.

2.2 **Duncan Gray agreed with the group that a letter should be sent to representatives of the Building Industry asking for a nominated contact for the group to invite on a consultation basis [Group Action].** Craig McCorrison pointed out that health service representatives from Lothian Health Board had proved helpful in the past and that they have an interest in the figures and have relevant technical expertise. Whilst Duncan Gray agreed with their use he felt that group size was important, he felt that Health Board representatives could be included in the user consultation questionnaire.

2.3 Concerning the group's relationship with the Scottish Census Advisory Group (SCAG), Duncan Gray felt that whilst they should be kept up to date with the work they should not determine the group's work plan, this would be decided by the group itself. **Duncan Gray also proposed that an open world wide web site ought to be set up showing the work of the group, the papers, minutes and methodologies [Action: Stevan Croasdale].** Regarding frequency of meetings Duncan Gray proposed anything more than quarterly would not be sustainable. Jan Freeke asked if SCAG would be content for us to report to the Built Environment Group. Duncan Gray agreed to regular reports to SCAG but that this group would decide its own function. Stephen Fraser reminded Duncan Gray that the next SCAG meeting was scheduled in June.

2.4 Jan Freeke asked about communication arrangements in the light of the withdrawal of some councils from COSLA. Although it would be preferable to use SCAG for Local Authority communication it no longer includes representatives from all Local Authorities. Duncan Gray felt the proposed web site would be an important point of communication of the ongoing work of the group that would be available to everybody. He asked if the Local Authority lead officers on this topic might change after the 31st of March when some Local Authorities will formally terminate their membership of COSLA. It was agreed that the Group would aim to keep all local authorities informed of its work through the use of the current full SCAG mailing lists. **To ensure that the group has access to a full range of local authority expertise on household estimates and projections, existing representation on the group would be maintained.**

AGENDA ITEM 3: WORK PLAN FOR 2001/02 (PAPER 2001/2)

3. Duncan Gray moved the meeting onto the work plan and asked Deborah Pegg to summarise paper 2001/2, he proposed that the group should go over it in the current meeting and re-visit once a year. Deborah Pegg summarised the proposed three-phase programme and pointed out that the results of the user consultation questionnaire would influence the work programme. Derek Neill pointed out that the group should assess methodologies first to avoid work on methods that may be dismissed in the future. Deborah Pegg agreed that the group should decide if the current stock based approach is preferable before we proceed, she also agreed that the timescales shown in the paper assume current methodology. **Craig McCorrison felt that a point of principle would be to pull release dates forward rather than to introduce changes that would push them back.** Duncan Gray agreed that this was an important issue and felt there was a balance to be made between speed and quality. Stephen Fraser felt the consultation would shed light on the correct balance. **Jan Freeke asked if the group ought to look at the implications of the 2001 Census,** Deborah Pegg pointed out her reference to this in phase 2. Concerning the Scottish Executive's Neighbourhood Statistics initiative, Jan Freeke asked if this may influence the geographies of household analyses. Duncan Gray felt that a steer may come from the group set up to look at neighbourhood statistics, one of its functions being the implementation of a consistent basis for small area statistics. Duncan Gray also felt that initially it would be areas with higher needs and deprivation that neighbourhood statistics would be developed. **The Group agreed that Neighbourhood stats should be flagged on the work plan, as something to consider.**

3.1 Concerning the user consultation questionnaire Jan Freeke asked if there ought to be separate forms for Local Authorities and other interested parties. Duncan Gray agreed to this proposal since different questions would be asked. For example the use of own figures as opposed to official Scottish Executive figures would be Local Authority specific. Jan Freeke also asked if the timescale for this should be to receive completed questionnaires with subsequent analyses by the end of June. Duncan Gray felt such a timescale would be tight and that formal government consultations allow 12 weeks for responses. Although this consultation would not have to adhere to this, and could therefore be shortened, Duncan Gray felt that it was not a good idea to demand an unreasonable turn around time.

3.2 **Craig McCorrison asked if household projections should be extended by another couple of years to be consistent with structure plans and GROS population projections.** It was generally agreed that although projections so far ahead do have reliability issues it would be preferable for the Scottish Executive to calculate these rather than the current extrapolation by the various structure plan teams.

AGENDA ITEM 4: DEFINITIONS USED IN HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS (PAPER 2001/3)

4. Duncan Gray summarised paper 2001/3 and pointed out that it was mainly for reference. Deborah Pegg felt that it should be updated and added to as the work of the group progresses. Its main function would be to act as a glossary of terms to ensure members were clear as to the full meaning of the terms used in discussions. Duncan Gray invited comments and additions. Concerning headship rates, Stephen Fraser pointed out that the Census assumed that the head of household was the same as the reference person. Derek Neill added that the DETR used household reference person and that because of sex issues the head of household had been re-allocated between censuses. Deborah Pegg asked if this was just terminology or a real difference in definition. Derek Neill added that we had no definition for vacant dwellings. **Deborah Pegg [Action] agreed that these would be amended in the light of these comments and revisited for the next meeting.**

AGENDA ITEM 5: HOUSEHOLD ESTIMATES FOR MID-1999, PROGRESS SO FAR AND TIMETABLE FOR PUBLICATION (PAPER 2001/4)

5. Deborah Pegg summarised paper 2001/4 for information and pointed out that the methodology to be used for the 1999 estimates is the same as that used for the 1998 mid-year estimates. Derek Neill asked if the position had moved on since the provisional estimates that had been sent within the last couple of weeks. Stevan Croasdale replied that their had been no further work since the provisional estimates had been sent out for comment. Duncan Gray asked for a summary of the responses so far received. Stevan Croasdale said that they did differ from Local Authority to Local Authority, some with extensive amendments to the calculated stock levels for 1999. Most Local Authorities however were happy with the estimates sent. Jan Freeke asked if it was true that if a Local Authority felt their household estimate should be higher this would lead to a resultant decrease in estimate across all other Local Authorities. Stevan Croasdale pointed out that since Local Authority estimates were calculated independently and summed to give a national total, this would not be the case, it would simply put the national total up. Derek Neill asked if the dwelling estimates could be published as well. Deborah Pegg pointed out that these were normally calculated separately at National level and published in September, **but that consideration could be given in future to publishing local authority dwelling figures used for the estimates.**

AGENDA ITEM 6: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS MADE BY THE GROUP IN 1999/00 (PAPER 2001/5)

6. Deborah Pegg summarised paper 2001/5. Although a lot of ground had been covered few decisions for implementation had been made. As such the paper would act as a reference. Deborah Pegg asked if any members felt that anything had been left out. Concerning the use of the council tax base information which had been considered, Duncan Gray felt that it did have weaknesses, especially concerning the variable updatedness and quality of the figures by Local Authority. **Derek Neill suggested that assessors be written to for their thoughts on the proposal to use their figures and to ascertain if the assumption of a mean delay of 3 months in processing is correct [Group Action].** Tom Snowling felt the council tax data would be around 90% complete 3 months after the measurement date. Duncan Gray explained that the information held in Local Authority revenues departments' billing systems looked to be potentially the most useful. The systems will hold information on numbers of dwellings and, through discounts and exemptions will give an account of dwellings that are vacant non-habitable and occupied by a single adult. In theory these records would be well

maintained as they are updated through the billing and tax collection process. However, quality might vary by time of year, depending on the timing of the bill chasing processes in councils. The Scottish Executive gets, at local authority level, detailed summaries of this information as at the end of September each year for grant purposes. Many of the Local Authorities put a lot of effort into 'cleaning' the data in order to supply these September figures. **It was agreed therefore that individual finance departments and assessors should be approached by individual members of the group for information on the reliability and suitability of these figures for our purposes with particular attention being drawn to the methods for dealing with vacancies and single adult households (first and second exemptions) [Group Action].**

6.1 Concerning the various voluntary population surveys many LA's do not carry out as they are found to be too costly and the response rate tends to be very poor. As such there is a lack of information at local authority level about household formation. Tom Snowling asked if the Community Health Index (CHI) information gathered by GPs would be a possible source. Alistair Harvey felt that from the work that he had done with the CHI that it would not be suitable. As a result **Duncan Gray [Action] agreed to write a detailed note on the suitability of the council tax base information for the next meeting.**

6.2 Previous meetings had raised the point that it was unclear where students are included in household estimates and projections. Students are included at their term time address in the GROS population projections. The household estimates are based on household information from the Census adjusted using information from stock returns. These figures are then used along with the GROS population projections for the household projections and will therefore be influenced by the inclusion of students. **Deborah Pegg [Action] agreed to write a paper to clarify the implications of the inclusion / exclusion of students in censuses and GROS population projections, for future discussion.**

AGENDA ITEM 7: QUESTIONNAIRE ON CURRENT USES OF HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS (PAPER 2001/6)

7. Duncan Gray summarised the two questionnaires supplied by Stephen Fraser and Jan Freeke. He felt that these should be used to put together a hybrid from the best points from each. It was agreed that questions 1 to 7 from Stephen's draft served as useful background information. Jan Freeke asked the group if they had any thoughts on the technical detail of the questionnaires. Duncan Gray was not keen to draw technical information from users since the purpose of the questionnaire is to ascertain the use and requirement for household statistics; any technical issues arising from the responses to the questionnaire would be tackled subsequently. The specific wording of some of the questions was changed after discussion, many of the questions being changed to be more open to prevent users from simply agreeing to across the board increases in household categories and geographical areas for example. The group recognised that responses to open questions would be more difficult to summarise than a questionnaire with responses within specific closed categories, however it was felt these results would be more useful so long as the summaries could be agreed. **Stephen Fraser offered his assistance in the summarising of completed questionnaires if required.** It was also agreed that the questionnaire would initially be for Local Authorities only, a separate questionnaire to for other users would be prepared and pursued at a later date. **A final draft questionnaire for LA's would be prepared by Duncan Gray [Action]** and copied around the group and a draft cover letter for comment before being sent out to Scottish Homes and Local Authority planners.

8. As promised at the start of the meeting Duncan Gray ran through the work programme again. By the end of June he expected that the first questionnaire for Local Authorities would have been completed, sent out and the responses summarised. Duncan Gray welcomed Stephen Fraser's offer of help in putting the summaries together and pointed out that he would like to draw on the group members' resources to complete the work of the group wherever possible. Duncan Gray would put together a detailed note on the suitability of the council tax base information with input from Local Authority revenues departments that are to be approached by individual group members. **The second questionnaire for other users would also be planned by the end of June. By mid-September the various possible alternative methodologies should be investigated, with a preferred solution decided upon, the feasibility of meeting need not currently met will be discussed and decisions made as to which to pursue.** These were agreed and the meeting drawn to a close.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9. Not discussed, but subsequently arranged for 20 June 2001.