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Karen Adam MSP
Convener
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

18 March 2026

Dear Karen,

I am writing to inform the committee of updates to work within my portfolio.

The Ministerial Population Taskforce met today and considered next steps for the delivery of the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan and Scotland's Migration Service, which represent significant programmes of work in delivering the ambitions set out within our Population Strategy.

I am pleased to therefore notify you that the Scottish Government will provide a funding package of £637,500 in 2026/27 to deliver Phase Two of the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP). This represents a 49% increase in funding from the £427,500 allocation delivered annually to local authorities during Phase One.

Positively, all those who submitted applications for Phase Two projects will be funded during the upcoming financial year. This means three new local authorities will receive funding, bringing the total to 10, in addition to new funding partnerships with regional economic development agencies. The full list of funded partners for this new phase of work is:

- The Highland Council
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- North Ayrshire Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Inverclyde Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Moray Council
- Falkirk Council
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- South of Scotland Enterprise

Additionally, following positive findings from an early insights evaluation of Scotland's

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Migration Service (SMS), initial steps will be taken to enable the service to be re-procured to continue beyond the end of current supplier contracts in March 2027. It will ultimately be a decision for the next Scottish Government about whether to maintain the service from 2027-28 onwards. However, given the length of time required to run a re-tendering process work needs to start now to secure service continuity, should the next administration agree to maintain the service. This will ensure that SMS is best placed to continue to support eligible migrants to relocate to Scotland, help employers and investors use the immigration system more effectively and efficiently, and support employers in meeting their skills and labour needs.

I believe that the continuation of both of these programmes of work will help Scotland to grow its economy, deliver public services, and support our communities to thrive.

I am copying this letter to the Presiding Officer, the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, and to party business managers. I am also copying the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands (RALRI) and the Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee to this correspondence, recognising that funding to support the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan is comprised of budget from both the Equalities portfolio and the RALRI portfolio.

Yours sincerely,

KAUKAB STEWART

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