

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 17 April 2018

### Economic Development Update

#### 1. Business:

- From November 2017 to February 2018 the Business Gateway team assisted **83 business start-ups**, of which 6 have met the new classification of 'Early Stage' growth. The Advisers have delivered 24 start-up workshops and 20 Growth workshops with 276 attendees. Growth Advisers continue to work with companies who have potential to achieve growth targets.
- Business Gateway continues to work across the Scottish Borders meeting with a number of intermediaries promoting the services available through Business Gateway and the Council. In total 74 Intermediary visits have been held during the period.
- Business Gateway has hosted two further Masterclass workshops in the last period – bringing in experts to present workshops on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and on Exporting. Feedback on both has been very positive, and a follow-up GDPR workshop has been scheduled to meet demand.
- Business Gateway Advisers have facilitated 30 Digital Boost 1-2-1s for clients, against a target of 15. This makes Scottish Borders a top performing region for Digital Boost.
- For the period from 15 November 2017 to 15 March 2018, the **Scottish Borders Business Fund** received 11 applications and approved 10 grants valued at £27,997.18, supporting projects with a value of £61,988.50. These projects are forecast **to create 18.5 jobs** with a forecast **economic impact of £482,419 GVA**.
- The **Scottish Borders Business Loan Fund** offers loans of between £1,000 and £20,000 over terms of up to three years. For the period from 15 November 2017 to 15 March 2018, the Loan Fund received 3 applications and approved 3 loans, valued at £41,148. These loans are forecast **to create 4 jobs** with an estimated forecast **economic impact of £118,052 GVA**.

#### 2. Regeneration:

- **Updates are set out in the item on Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan 2018/19.**
- **Tweed Valley Tourism BID (Business Improvement District)** the Tweed Valley Tourism BID is progressing with the appointment of a project manager and a formal launch planned for 19 April 2018. The BID is aiming to progress to ballot in October 2019.

### **3. Tourism & Events**

- The Scottish Rail Preservation Society will once again charter the Steam train trips from Fife to Tweedbank each Sunday in August 2018. There are currently four pre-bookable excursions running from Tweedbank and more initiatives in Galashiels for those who don't pre-book. Last year (2017) the seats were sold out at over 400 passengers per train.
- Starting in May 2018 there will be a new supplier delivering the content for the interactive kiosks at the stations and in town centres. This will bring new investment and new software, with real time transport information in addition to increased capacity for visitor and business information.
- A new Rural Tourism Infrastructure funding opportunity was launched at the start of April 2018. The Fund is being managed by Visit Scotland. It is intended that Scottish Borders Council submit an expression of interest application for potential capital projects by the 24 April 2018.

### **4. Funding:**

- **European funding** continues to be available to projects through the Scottish Borders LEADER and European Maritime Fisheries Fund 2014 – 2020 programmes. The UK and Scottish Governments have confirmed that applicants whose grant funding is agreed and contracted before the point of 'Brexit' will be able to complete their projects, even if the work is scheduled to take place after leaving the EU.
- The LEADER Local Action Group has approved grant funding of £2.01m to date, including 22 community, 4 farm diversification, 9 rural business development, 2 Enterprise Facilitator projects and one cooperation project. Up to 7 applications are expected for consideration by the Local Action Group in May 2018.
- The **Forth Fisheries Local Action Group** has met 5 times and has recommended 13 projects to Marine Scotland, committing £452k of funding. In total, 22 Expressions of Interest have been received, with 3 not progressing. The latest FLAG committee was held on 13 March 2018, where 3 projects totalling £67k were recommended to Marine Scotland.

### **5. Property & Projects:**

#### *Galalaw Business Park:*

- This development of 4 workshops is part of the Hawick Business Growth project which is being funded by Scottish Government. Work had been progressing well on site, but the recent bad weather has delayed the project by about 3 weeks. The contractor has prepared the site and erected the steel frame. Blockwork walls are being constructed and roofing is on, with wall cladding due soon. The drainage and the surface water SUDS storage area has been constructed. The current programme should be complete by the end of May 2018.

- **Property** - 193 general property enquiries have been received to date in 2017/18. This has resulted in a total of 25 new leases which will generate £99.4k in annual rental income for the Council. With regard to the Council's portfolio of leased industrial units, yards and shops, the occupancy level for 2017/18 is **87%**.
- The 193 property enquiries to date include 39 enquiries about purchasing plots. Of these, 12 are at the start of detailed exploration of business requirements and the cost implications. Sales are in hand for 2 enquirers from this year and 8 earlier enquiries. These sales are for plots at part-EU funded sites at Coldstream, Hawick and Lauder, and other employment land in Eyemouth, Hawick, Jedburgh and Kelso.

#### **6. Low Carbon Economic Strategy**

- Resource Efficiency – referral process for businesses from Business Gateway to Resource Efficient Scotland continues to develop, with 4 new referrals being progressed during Jan-March 2018.
- Housing Strategy Energy Efficiency – Scottish Borders Home Energy Forum established, chaired by Nile Istephan, Chief Executive Eildon Housing Association. Role of Forum will be to progress improvements in the energy efficiency of domestic properties across the Scottish Borders, facilitating access to advice and financial support to all housing tenures.
- Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy – this strategy is one of the priorities of the Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy. A project plan for production of the strategy is now finalised, with an agreed completion date of March 2019.

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