



**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY, 16TH  
APRIL, 2024**

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**Please find attached the documents in respect of Items 4 and 5 on the agenda for the above meeting.**

4.	<b>Economic Development Briefing Note</b> (Pages 3 - 14)  (a) Consider briefing paper by Director Resilient Communities. (Copy to follow.) (b) Invest in South Scotland presentation.	20 mins
5.	<b>Tourism Strategy Delivery Plan</b> (Pages 15 - 90)  Copy to follow.	15 mins

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## Economic Development Briefing Note

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### Report by Director - Resilient Communities

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### Executive Committee

**16 April 2024**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with an update on key areas of economic development delivery in the Scottish Borders. It identifies the major policies and strategies that are currently driving regional economic development and details key pieces of work.**
- 1.2 The Local Employability Partnership (LEP) continues to evolve and has been actively engaging with partners and stakeholders to ensure the delivery of services and interventions tailored to the needs of our priority client groups. Throughout the 2023/24 financial year, the SBC Employability Service has worked closely with a caseload of 533 individuals across the Scottish Borders and it is noticeable that there has been a consistent increase in engagement and participation, reflecting a rising demand and the need for additional support.
- 1.3 Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) agreed to form a strategic partnership for delivery of the Business Gateway service in November 2020, with the transfer of services completed in April 2021. This report provides an update on delivery through the third quarter of the previous financial year and indicates 61 business start-ups in the Scottish Borders during the identified period and good progress on general Business Gateway activity.
- 1.4 The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy was launched at the SSDA conference in Dumfries in March this year. The ten-year strategy hopes to increase the visitor economy by £1bn and support the delivery on an additional 6,000 jobs in the South.
- 1.5 Following assessment of the latest round of funding applications in March 2024, 33 projects in the Scottish Borders have been awarded approximately £4.5m of UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) investment to date.
- 1.6 The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Business Infrastructure Programme (Scotland) is a £13.7m capital programme for the South of Scotland, specifically designed to deliver modern serviced industrial units at five key sites across the South of Scotland, including sites at Coldstream and Hawick. The Coldstream project started in January 2024 and is due to be completed by the end of the current calendar year.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

- (a) Notes the information provided regarding current economic development delivery affecting the Scottish Borders; and**
- (b) Notes that future delivery updates will be reported back to the Executive Committee on a regular basis.**

### 3 KEY AREAS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY

3.1 The current economic development delivery the Scottish Borders combines various policies and strategies at national, regional and local level. An update on some of the key areas of local economic development delivery are provided below.

#### 3.2 **Employability**

The Local Employability Partnership (LEP) continues to evolve, actively engaging with partners and stakeholders to ensure the delivery of services and interventions tailored to the needs of our priority client groups. The LEP plays a pivotal role in advancing the Scottish Government's aspirations for No One Left Behind (NOLB), with a specific emphasis on addressing local needs to achieve our vision for economic transformation and combatting child poverty.

The goal is to establish a system that is more personalised and responsive to the requirements of individuals of all ages seeking assistance and support on their path to employment. This focus is especially important for individuals with health conditions, disabilities, and others facing disadvantages when attempting to enter the job market. The LEP provides strong leadership and governance, guided by a clear vision statement:

*"We will work together to deliver effective and easily understood employability and skills pathways focused on positive outcomes which are person-centred and lead to sustainable, fair and rewarding work".*

The LEP is actively engaged in mapping employability provision across the region, including within the third sector. This initiative aims to pinpoint areas of need and identify where additional interventions are necessary to assist individuals along their employment journey.

With a particular focus on child poverty and the successful recruitment of a Child Poverty Co-ordinator, events focusing specifically on child poverty engagement have been delivered with parents from three of our Early Years Centres which are in areas with the highest levels of poverty.

These events focussed on discussing the effects of poverty on parents and families, as well as the impact of their circumstances on their opportunities for further education, training, and future employment. Common needs were consistently identified across all parent groups. Through these events, parents have been able to pinpoint areas where local services could improve to better support their needs and positively impact the entire family.

Additionally, further organised engagement events with partners involved housing, homelessness, welfare benefits, DWP, and Gender Based Violence. This collaborative effort identifies areas of effective practice as well as gaps in services. By taking ongoing actions and providing support to integrate new working methods and pathways will provide a significant difference for families across the region, offering a holistic, whole family approach.

Throughout the 2023/24 financial year, the SBC Employability Service has worked closely with a caseload of 533 individuals across the Scottish Borders. There has been a consistent increase in engagement and participation, reflecting a rising demand and the necessity for additional support.

The service successfully assisted 52 individuals in accessing education and supported 78 in securing employment. Furthermore, 80 individuals progressed through the employability support pipeline or began training. Three individuals found employment through an Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI), while eight transitioned into volunteering roles.

The Employability Service remain committed to helping more individuals make progress towards their employment aspirations through a range of interventions, including personalised support.

### 3.3 Business Gateway

Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) agreed to form a strategic partnership for delivery of the Business Gateway service in the Scottish Borders in November 2020, and to transfer the operational delivery to SOSE in April 2021.

As part of this partnership arrangement, it was agreed that regular updates on business start-ups and general activity targets would be provided to Scottish Borders Council.

The Business Gateway outputs from quarter three of financial year 2023/24 (October to December), are highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Business Gateway Outputs – Quarter Three 2023/24**

Output Targets 2021/22									
Start-up Service	Current Position	Outputs 2022/23	Targets 2023/24	Actual 01 Outputs	Actual 02 Outputs	Actual 03 Outputs	Actual 04 Outputs	Total 2023/24 Outputs	
Total number of start-up customers who have begun trading	Building a post-covid recovery pipeline of start-up business	217	150	52	55	61			
Start-up with Employees	Building a post-covid recovery pipeline of business who are employing staff	19	20	0	11	8			
Number of business Start-up enquiries	New target introduced to demonstrate demand for individuals exploring business start-up.	450	300	123	96	88			
Number of Start-up workshops delivered by Business Gateway Scottish Borders	BG workshops delivered locally, these workshops	86	35	11	6	20			
Number of clients attending start-up workshops/seminars	This target reflects the estimated number of attendees from Scottish Borders at national workshops/seminars, which forms part of our pipeline	525	250	94	87	119			

The Business Gateway team continue to focus on client engagement, assisting individuals to start-up in business with wider activities including:

- Strong quarter with 61 starts in the current period;

- Business Gateway Advisors attended Borders College to meet one to one with students on college enterprise courses to discuss their business ideas and review their business plans;
- Attendance at 'Can Do' Expo in Glasgow and Scottish Edge finals;
- Attendance at Supplier Development Day in Langholm. Good attendance throughout the day with over 300 booked;
- As part of Global Entrepreneurship Week, Business Gateway staged a Drop-in Day with a Facebook workshop at Selkirk; and
- Attendance at BG National seminar on the Investment Fund for Scotland.

### 3.4 **Events, Tourism and Cycling**

#### **Events**

Officers are continuing to implement the Scottish Borders Strategic Events Strategy. This ambitious plan provides support for strategic events that have a regional economic impact, are sustainable and are working towards the delivery of net zero.

As reported to Executive in December 2023, the successful workshop delivery programme to event organisers continues to be developed. There are plans to expand on this programme in 2024 by offering new workshops on "Measuring Impacts" to include monitoring the social, economic, and environmental impacts of events.

The refreshed Scottish Borders Council 'Strategic Events Fund' has now been launched and the first round of applicants have been reviewed by the assessment panel, and successful applicants have already been supported such as the 2024 Borders Book Festival.

The 'Community Festival and Events Small Fund' has also recently awarded funding following review by the assessment panel to help provide a more inclusive experience for community festivals and events. An example of this type of event supported is the Hawick Reivers Festival.

The 'Community Cycling Fund' which totalled £125,000 and was set up as legacy from the UCI Cycling World Championships was fully subscribed and has subsequently closed. Examples of the projects that were supported included;

- Sea the Change Easter Cycling Event in Eyemouth;
- Scottish Borders Cycling Development Group Event at Bowhill; and
- The inaugural Light Up the Trails Family Event at Glentress.

The Events Organiser Toolkit which has recently been in development is now at final draft stage and on track to be fully available for the current event season.

## **Tourism**

The ten-year South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy was launched at the SSDA conference in Dumfries on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The strategy aims to increase the visitor economy by £1bn over the next decade, supporting an additional 6,000 jobs in the South was developed following extensive partnership working between the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), VisitScotland, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council. The strategy has been welcomed and endorsed by the Convention of the South of Scotland, with Scottish Government ministerial and multi public agency commitment to key actions.

A three-year Action Plan has also been created incorporating all 109 actions which were identified. The plan focuses on the four strands contained with the Strategy (Inspire, Develop, Support and Responsible) and 22 areas of work.

The Convention of the South of Scotland (COSS) on 26<sup>th</sup> February focused on the tourism ambition of the region, and agreed endorsement of the new Tourism Strategy and the contribution national agencies can make to supporting delivery of the strategy. Five key areas of activity where the role of national agencies can make a significant contribution were identified as follows; Cycling, Tourism Road Signage, Natural Capital and Forestry, Food and Drink, and Iron Age and Roman Heritage.

### **3.5 Shared Prosperity Fund**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is part of the UK Government Levelling Up agenda, designed to help deliver local investment and to help build pride in place and increase life chances in every area across the UK.

UK Government guidance indicates that this investment should be directed to:

- Help provide an increase in job opportunities;
- Improve living standards;
- Improve public services in areas where they are most needed; and
- Help empower communities to deliver services or facilities for community benefit.

The SPF is delivered over four key funding strands:

- Community & Place;
- Supporting Local Business;
- People & Skills; and
- Multiply (adult numeracy)

In December 2022, Scottish Borders was awarded £5,369,972 and the programme will run until 31st March 2025. The SPF allocation for the Scottish Borders has been provided in Table 2.



**Table 2 – SPF Funding Allocation for the Scottish Borders**

SPF Funding	2023/24	2024/2025	Total
Community & Place	£673,676	£1,272,032	£1,945,708
Supporting Local Business	£575,090	£681,825	£1,256,915
People & Skills	£573,504	£747,941	£1,331,445
Multiply	£403,718	£217,387	£621,105
4% Management /Admin	£107,399	£107,400	£214,799
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£2,333,387</b>	<b>£3,026,585</b>	<b>£5,369,972</b>

Two independent advisory panels have been established to consider SPF applications:

- The Place Partnership considers applications for Community and Place and Supporting Local Business; and
- The Local Employability Partnership considers applications for People and Skills and Multiply.

Once considered by the advisory panels, the applications are further considered by a reference group of Elected Members before being approved under delegated powers by the Director of Resilient Communities and the Director of Finance and Procurement.

Following the most recent round of applications, three projects have been awarded approximately £316,000 of SPF funding. Details of the successful projects have been provided below:

- Eyemouth Harbour Trust has been awarded £95,000 towards feasibility work relating to proposed harbour development work. It is hoped that this could provide an opportunity for Eyemouth to become a strategically important gateway port for offshore wind developments, as well as fishing, leisure and commercial marine traffic;
- South of Scotland Enterprise has been awarded £190,000 to deliver a programme of entrepreneurship skills development and business support activities for women in enterprise and youth-led enterprises; and
- Capital City Partnership was awarded approximately £31,000 to undertake feasibility work in collaboration with five other local authority areas in relation to the Regional Prosperity Framework Visitor Economy Partnership Programme, to review cycling, cultural assets and cruise tourism potential across the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region area

Following four rounds of application discussions at the Place Partnership and Local Employability Partnership, approximately £4.5m of the Scottish Borders Council SPF allocation has been committed to 33 projects and

programmes at the present time. Further details of all the projects that have been awarded funding can be found on the SBC website using the following link:

<https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/community-grants-funding/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/2>

### **3.6 Community Led Local Development Fund**

The Community Led Local Development Fund (CLLD) is a Scottish Government funding programme, administered on behalf of the Local Action Group (LAG) by Scottish Borders Council. The LAG consists of volunteers from the local community and other key organisations.

This year the LAG was allocated £270,000 in revenue and £120,000 in capital to distribute to suitable projects that tackle social inclusion, seek to alleviate poverty (especially Child/Fuel poverty) or move towards Net Zero. Applicants were asked to develop projects with an ask of up to £20,000.

The LAG chose to fund seven projects predominantly aimed at moving organisations towards Net-Zero, ten projects looking to alleviate poverty, and eleven projects with a strong social inclusion focus.

The CLLD funding for 2023/24 has now been fully committed with the LAG awarding funding to 28 groups in total. Details of all the allocated grants will be published in the near future, and this information will be distributed to Elected Members in advance of publication.

### **3.7 Place Based Investment Fund**

In 2021 the Scottish Government announced a five year programme of capital investment for place based investment projects with £550,000 being allocated to the Scottish Borders within the previous financial year. All Local Authorities in Scotland have been provided with an allocation based on total population and deprivation levels.

Officers identified a number of projects throughout the Scottish Borders, primarily through the Expression of Interest (EOI) process and these applications were assessed by the Place Partnership Advisory Panel.

Six projects have been awarded approximately £400,000 of Place Based Investment funding with details provided below:

- Border Search and Rescue has been awarded approximately £30,000 to help deliver the final phase of works required for their new base at Pinnaclehill Industrial Estate in Kelso;
- Tweedsmuir Community Company has been awarded £29,000 to undertake the work associated with a building warrant application for the proposed new build bunkhouse at the Crook Inn;

- Eyemouth Harbour Trust has been awarded approximately £121,000 to install new railings and ladders in and around the harbour to help improve the safety and the appearance of the area;
- Hawick Conservation Area Regenerations Scheme (CARS) has been awarded approximately £142,000 to undertake a jointly funded public realm project which aims to create an attractive pedestrian route connecting the James Thomson footbridge to the High Street, with improvements set to enhance the setting of the former Glenmac Mill;
- Kelso Skate Project has been awarded £52,000 for the provision of five low energy LED floodlights at the existing facility at Shedden Park; and
- Peebles Bowling Club has been awarded approximately £25,000 which will help contribute to the first phase of redevelopment works at the existing clubhouse, including enhanced changing facilities and toilets.

### 3.8 **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal**

The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal was signed in March 2021 by the Borderlands Partnership, the UK and Scottish Governments, and the five local authorities within the Borderlands area: Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council,<sup>1</sup> Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland Council, and Scottish Borders Council. The Deal will provide a total funding package of £452m over 10 years for the Borderlands area, with £150m available for the South of Scotland, and £64 million for the Scottish Borders.

Since the last update was provided to the Committee, work has continued on a number of programmes and projects, as detailed below.

**Destination Tweed** is a £25m capital programme centred on the creation of a new 113-mile long walking and cycling trail from Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed. In addition to the River Tweed Trail, the programme constitutes 12 projects that cover economic, cultural, and environmental themes.

In 2023 the Outline Business Case for the Destination Tweed project was approved by Scottish Borders Council and subsequently signed off by Scottish Government. Since then, small elements of relevant improvement work have continued on sections of the trail with the support of external funding from South of Scotland Enterprise and Sustrans.

Since the Outline Business Case approval, work to develop the Full Business Case for the project has been taking place and once this piece of work has been approved it will help to unlock £10m of investment for the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle and Cumbria Councils have now been superseded by the new unitary authorities of Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council.

This work has been led by Tweed Forum and supported by officers from Economic Development, with consultants procured to support the economic modelling and the benefits realisation processes. Officers have also worked in partnership with Tweed Forum to develop the technical designs, project manage the complex programme of work and deliver the elements of infrastructure on identified sections of the route.

In March 2024 the Full Business Case was submitted to The Borderlands Programme Management Office for review before subsequently being submitted to Scottish Government on 14th March for review and approval. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in May, allowing the Full Business Case to be presented to Scottish Borders Council and the Borderlands Partnership Board for formal sign off at the earliest opportunity.

The **Business Infrastructure Programme** (Scotland) is a £13.7m capital programme for the South of Scotland, which includes £3m of Borderlands funding for the Scottish Borders and a contribution of £632,000 from Scottish Borders Council. This funding is for the building of industrial units and the servicing of land at five sites across the South of Scotland, including Coldstream and Hawick in the Scottish Borders. The Full Business Case for the Coldstream project was approved by Scottish Borders Council on 31 August 2023 and by the Borderlands Partnership Board on 13 September 2023.

Work commenced on the Coldstream project in January 2024 and is due to be completed by the end of the calendar year. The development is being delivered by SB Contracts and managed by our in-house project management team. The project is currently progressing well.

Work is due to commence on the development of a Full Business Case for the Hawick site within the Scottish Borders Business Infrastructure programme and members will be updated on this project in due course.

### 3.9 **South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy**

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) has refreshed the current Regional Economic Strategy delivery plan for the period 2024-2026, with a sharper focus on delivering Housing, Skills and Transport priorities over the next two years. Work on this refresh is near completion, and a number of sub-groups have been established to take this work forward. The REP has also drafted a new South of Scotland Housing Action Plan which will also be launched over the coming months.

A relaunch of the REP website is underway, along with work to promote investment in the South of Scotland under the 'Invest in South Scotland' branding.

### 3.10 **UK Government Levelling Up Partnership**

The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement £80million for four new Levelling Up Partnerships (LUPS) in Scotland, including the Scottish Borders. These are the first for Scotland, following UK Government delivery of a programme of LUPs across England. Up to £20million direct capital funding will be available for each of the four LUP areas in Scotland, covering Scottish Borders, Western Isles, Argyll & Bute and Dundee City councils.

Levelling Up Partnerships are about Government working with a place to address specific local challenges and opportunities.

The first stage of the process initiated has involved a 'deep dive' with UK Government officials, to understand the needs and aspirations of local communities. This process has focused on areas of greatest need and has involved consultation with local residents and community groups.

This process has looked at quantitative evidence to identify challenges and opportunities, working closely with the local authority and also with Scottish Government officials to also consider linkages to the Growth Deals and the Regional Economic Partnership.

The first stage of the process is nearing completion and it is expected that an update to Elected Members on key initial findings will be provided later this month.

## **4 IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial**

Each programme of work noted in the paper is being delivered within approved budgets. This is a descriptive report and therefore detailed analysis of each project has not been provided.

### **4.2 Risk and Mitigations**

Each programme of work noted in the paper has their own particular issues in relation to risk and potential mitigation and will be reported on individually. This is a descriptive report and therefore detailed analysis of each project has not been provided in this instance.

### **4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

Each programme of work noted in the paper has their own particular issues in relation to potential impact assessment and will be reported on individually. However, a key aspect of Scottish Borders Council's work in relation to Economic Development is to reduce barriers to inequality and help to promote sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

### **4.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

The intention is for each of the programmes of work noted in the paper to provide socially and environmentally responsible decision making, balanced with delivering economic benefits to help sustain local communities and where applicable driving local supply chains and the circular economy.

#### 4.5 **Climate Change**

The intention is for each of the programmes of work noted in the paper to provide socially and environmentally responsible decision-making processes and to have sustainability as a core theme.

#### 4.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report provides an update on a number of programmes of work that will have a positive impact on all areas of the Scottish Borders.

#### 4.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

#### 4.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to the scheme of administration or the scheme of delegation proposed in this report.

### 5 **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Director of Finance and Procurement, the Director of Corporate Governance, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director of People Performance & Change, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted on this report. Comments received on the day will be incorporated into the final version of the report.

#### **Approved by**

**Samantha Smith**  
**Jenni Craig**

**Chief Officer Economic Development**  
**Director of Resilient Communities**

#### **Author(s)**

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Jane Warcup	Principal Officer – Economic Development
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#### **Background Papers:**

##### **Previous Minute Reference:**

Economic Development Update, 5 December 2023

Economic Development Update, 12 September 2023

Economic Development Update, 18 April 2023

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Graeme Johnstone can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at: [gjohnstone@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:gjohnstone@scotborders.gov.uk)



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## **SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

**Report by Director of Resilient Communities**

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**Executive Committee**

**16 April 2024**

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### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with a copy of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan. This Action Plan supports the South of Scotland strategy, launched on 20th March 2024 (Appendix 1) which has been welcomed and endorsed by the Convention of the South of Scotland, with Scottish Government ministerial and multi public agency commitment to key actions. These actions are set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The first Regional Economic Strategy included a commitment to “Develop a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Destination and Marketing Strategy” which the Action Plan supports under the theme of Cultural and Creative Excellence, Action 4 (C).
- 1.3 All five of the key agencies in the South of Scotland, including Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, South of Scotland Destination Alliance, and VisitScotland have been collaborating to support the development of the Action Plan to deliver a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland.
- 1.4 The Strategy and Action Plan reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract more visitors and increase market value.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **I recommend that Executive:**
  - (a) **Endorses the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan, and;**
  - (b) **Continues to recognise the potential of the South of Scotland to contribute to the successful delivery of the National Tourism Strategy “Scotland Outlook 2030” and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.**

### **3 SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

- 3.1 All five of the key agencies in the South of Scotland, including Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), and VisitScotland have been collaborating to support the development of a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland and a supporting Action Plan. The Strategy was endorsed by Scottish Borders Council on 21st February 2024, in advance of its launch on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024.
- 3.2 The creation of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan has been an inclusive process with a wide range of consultation exercises to ensure buy-in across key agencies, stakeholders, tourism businesses and communities.
- 3.3 In addition to the five key partners, an Advisory Group was formed to offer guidance and challenge the agencies at key milestones throughout the process. The Advisory Group included a range of national partners with a regional interest and key business leaders from across the visitor economy in the south.
- 3.4 As part of the process, the strategy partners held consultations around potential themes and content for the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, including local area meetings, online surveys and visitor feedback. This strategy translates the National Shared Vision, Outlook 2030 for the needs and opportunities of the South of Scotland, recognising the visitor economy is a huge area of opportunity for the South and the Scottish Borders.
- 3.5 The 22 areas of work within the strategy reflect the four Ambitions for Growth (Inspire, Develop, Support and Responsible), which are fixed for the next ten years. The Action Plan scopes out an initial three-year (2024-27) period, each of the 109 identified actions also states which organisation has lead responsibility for delivery and which others are supporting; how these actions will be delivered and what indicative timescales will be followed. This is a dynamic document, with actions evolving based on feedback and the changing business landscape.
- 3.6 The action plan will be delivered in partnership with the industry within existing approved budgets and will be used to attract external funding and new investment where appropriate into the South of Scotland.
- 3.7 Executive is asked to endorse the Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 2).

### **4 IMPLICATIONS**



#### 4.1 **Financial**

The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract new visitors and increase market value by growing the visitor economy. The Action Plan will be delivered within existing approved budgets and using external funding opportunities as these arise.

#### 4.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

Tourism is a priority for Scottish Borders Council and a South of Scotland wide strategy and Action Plan will focus on developing the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand. Tourism is a key contributor to Scotland's socio-economic landscape creating jobs, sustaining communities and enhancing wellbeing for visitors.

Competition from other regions in Scotland and the UK means that the public and private sector need to work effectively together to ensure the South of Scotland and the Scottish Borders is a leading visitor destination. There is a risk that if the Council does not support tourism development, economic, environmental and social benefits will not be realised.

#### 4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

A key aspect of Scottish Borders Council's work in relation to Economic Development is to reduce inequality and help to promote sustainable, inclusive economic growth. The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan will ensure the tourism sector incorporates socially and environmentally responsible decision making, balanced with providing economic benefits and helping to sustain communities and where applicable support local supply chains and the circular economy.

#### 4.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

The Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan contributes to Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 8; Decent Work and Economic Growth .and Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

#### 4.5 **Climate Change**

The South of Scotland Tourism industry should be recognised as a leader in sustainability. Caring for the natural environment should be a priority for everyone and will remain a priority with the UK drive to support a Just Transition to Net Zero by 2045. Tourism business will be required to reduce emissions and champion environmental sustainability across the industry and where practical have responsibility as a core theme.

#### 4.6 **Rural Proofing**

The report highlights the intention of the South of Scotland to expand the value of tourism thereby providing rural communities

with more opportunities from increased visitor numbers and economic activity that will have a positive impact on all areas of the Scottish Borders.

**4.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

**4.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to the scheme of administration, or the scheme of delegation proposed in this report.

**5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 The Director of Finance and Procurement, the Director of Corporate Governance, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director of People Performance & Change, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted on this report. Comments received will be incorporated into the final version of the report.

**Approved by**

**Jenni Craig**  
**Director of Resilient Communities**

**Author(s)**

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jane Warcup	Principal Officer – Economic Development
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**Background Papers:** None

**Previous Minute Reference:** Scottish Borders Council, 21 February 2024

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jane Warcup can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

**Contact us at** [jwarcup@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:jwarcup@scotborders.gov.uk)

# Scotland Starts Here: A Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland

2024-2034

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## Our Vision

We will make the South of Scotland a thriving, responsible, year-round destination; leveraging our unique geography, culture, history and landscape to create Scotland's fastest growing visitor economy, attracting international visitors, creating quality employment and powering community prosperity.

## Our Ambition for Growth:

- Increase our visitor economy by £1 billion, to £1.76bn by 2034.

- Support a further 6,000+ jobs, to 20,000 FTE by 2034

### 1. Inspire visitors to come to the South of Scotland ▶

- a. Develop the **Destination Position and Profile**, so target markets know about us and why they should visit ▶

Develop a **year-round destination** by bringing in new visitors through the shoulder months and winter ▶

- c. Inspire and engage the **travel trade**, and help businesses be travel trade ready ▶
- d. Better **leverage our designations**, accolades and awards to bring in new visitors ▶
- e. Have game-changing ambition to **attract international visitors** by building an iconic, totemic, national flagship visitor attraction in the South of Scotland ▶

### 2. Develop the visitor experience, with a focus on quality ▶

- a. **Improve the quality** of our attractions, accommodation, food and drink ▶

- b. Create **Growth and Development Hubs** in areas such as: cycling, literary tourism, dark skies, agritourism, food and drink, equestrian, film/TV, and golf/country sports ▶

- c. Improve the availability and accuracy of **visitor information** ▶

- d. Maximise our **events** programme to attract visitors ▶

- e. Expand the **accommodation** offer to better fit visitor needs ▶

- f. Identify the **infrastructure** gaps and solutions for our businesses and visitors ▶

- g. Attract significant **inward investment** to develop our bed-stock, visitor attractions and food and drink offerings ▶

### 3. Support business to succeed ▶

- a. Enable effective **collaboration and mutual support** between businesses and support agencies ▶

- b. Ensure businesses and local communities are well **represented** in policy-making and regulation ▶

- c. Develop quality **year-round employment** for a skilled local workforce ▶

- d. Develop and share **data insights** which will genuinely inform decision-making and contribute to success ▶

### 4. Act responsibly for long-term collective benefit ▶

- a. Protect and enhance our **Natural Capital** ▶

- b. Support businesses and the destination on the journey to **Net Zero** ▶

- c. Support **community-leadership** and community benefit ▶

- d. Develop an **accessible and inclusive** offer that attracts visitors of all ages and backgrounds ▶

- e. Have effective **visitor management** to preserve the unspoilt nature of our region ▶

- f. Support **motorhomes** to contribute to the visitor economy in responsible ways ▶

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# Executive Summary:

The South of Scotland set itself a five-year (2020-2025) Covid-recovery target of establishing a visitor economy worth £750m and increasing the associated number of jobs by 6,500. It successfully achieved these targets two years earlier than planned.

We want to maintain the positive momentum and build on this success by thinking with unprecedented ambition about the coming decade. We want to develop and grow the potential of tourism and hospitality in the South of Scotland, and we will achieve this through a 'Team South' approach which has partnership and collaboration at its heart.

Following consultations with hundreds of businesses, enterprises and communities, this strategy has been developed by the two local authorities, VisitScotland, the SSDA and SOSE. It sets out an inspiring vision for the coming decade:

***“We will make the South of Scotland a thriving, responsible, year-round destination; leveraging our unique geography, culture, history and landscape to create Scotland’s fastest growing visitor economy, attracting international visitors, creating quality employment and powering community prosperity.”***

Through this Responsible Tourism Strategy, we will:

- **increase our visitor economy by £1 billion**, to £1.76bn by 2034.
- **support a further 6,000 jobs**, to 20,000 FTE posts by 2034.

We will achieve this radical growth by:

- a) extending the season and developing the South of Scotland as a year-round ‘rural escape’ destination for the 14m people within 2-4 hours travel time;
- b) becoming a ‘go to’ rather than a ‘go through’ destination; and
- c) increasing international visitor numbers, who spend significantly more and stay longer than domestic visitors.

We will invest in building reasons to visit the South of Scotland, developing high quality experiences for visitors, developing our voice and brand, and better telling our story. We will be loud and we will be proud.

While achieving this, we will always remember that this is a Responsible Tourism Strategy. We will not shy from our responsibilities to: our communities, our climate, our natural capital, our culture, our visitors, our children and our workforce. We will create a thriving visitor economy which: delivers economic prosperity and community benefit; supports quality, year-round employment; minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts; champions accessibility, inclusion and diversity; enhances our natural world; supports the industry on its journey to achieving Net Zero; and has community leadership, collaboration and partnership at its core.



Having listened to communities and business, we set out 22 priority areas in which we will work to achieve our vision, spread across four strategic objectives:

1) **Inspire visitors to come to the South of Scotland:**

Developing our destination position and profile, and bringing our overarching 'Scotland Starts Here' brand alive; transforming the South of Scotland into a year-round destination; inspiring the travel trade as to the potential of the region; better leveraging our designations; and working with game-changing ambition to attract high-spending international visitors.

2) **Develop the visitor experience, with a focus on quality:**

Actively supporting businesses and enterprises to increase the quality of their offering; establishing Growth and Development Hubs in areas like cycling, literary tourism, dark skies, agritourism and equestrianism, which we know can have a catalytic impact; offering clear, consistent, and centrally located visitor information to make it an easy destination to visit, encouraging people to stay longer and spend more; increasing, and better connecting, our programme of events across the region, with a strategic spread throughout the year; ensuring we have the right accommodation, in the right place, at the right price-point; ensuring we have the underlying infrastructure for tourism to succeed; and attracting scalable, sustainable inward investment.

3) **Support business to succeed:**

Building new destination-wide collaborations, with peer learning and mutual support; actively listening to, representing and acting on the views of communities and local business; building a skilled, valued, motivated local workforce; and better use of data to help businesses and enterprises make successful decisions based on local market insights.

4) **Act responsibly for long-term collective benefit:**

Supporting businesses on their journey to achieving Net Zero; embracing community-led tourism; ensuring the South of Scotland is an accessible, inclusive and diverse destination; building visitor management systems into all new growth; protecting the environment while maximising the local economic benefit of all those who visit us, no matter how they choose to arrive or move around the region. This will mitigate potential risks and community concerns and help protect and enhance our natural capital which is our greatest asset and our overriding responsibility to future generations.

The South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), VisitScotland, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Scottish Borders Council, and Dumfries and Galloway Council are committed to achieving the vision set out in this strategy, which forms part of the wider Regional Economic Strategy. We recognise that significant delivery lies with our businesses and communities, and commit to supporting their endeavours to achieve this vision.

Behind this strategy is the first of three, three-year Action Plans which tracks in detail exactly what actions each organisation is responsible for, over the coming years, to ensure we are collectively accountable for the delivery of every component of the strategy. We will also develop a new, innovative and long-term funding model to secure the capacity needed to achieve our collective goals for the South of Scotland's visitor economy.

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**We will, together, make the South of Scotland the most sustainable, talked about, successful, energetic, and coveted destination in Scotland. Because #ScotlandStartsHere.**

**Join us on this journey.**



Caerlaverock Castle, Dumfries and Galloway

## The time for the South of Scotland is now.

There has never been such effective partnership, collaboration and collective action across public agencies, businesses, communities and individuals within the South of Scotland.

Through our 'Team South' approach, we will build a thriving, year-round visitor economy, with tourism and hospitality powering community and economic prosperity for the coming decade.

Momentum within and for the South has been building since before the Covid pandemic but now, with the combined forces of Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) as a united destination management and marketing organisation, SOSE as our first dedicated enterprise agency, increased levels of inward investment, and our first ever Regional Economic Strategy, the opportunity is ours for the taking.

We're thinking differently, planning differently and doing things differently, all in order to make a real, positive and lasting change for the people who live, work and visit here.

We have had significant strategic wins in recent years as a result of this approach and our collective energy, including the formation of the SSDA, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, and our success with cycling.

Tourism has always played an invaluable role in the economy of the South of Scotland and our local industry has shown consistent improvement and an encouraging growth trajectory in recent years. However, we believe that **if we think ambitiously, plan strategically, work collaboratively and act decisively, we can move from incremental growth to transformative, game-changing growth.** This is our vision.

This strategy sets out how we will achieve this vision. It is informed by consultations with hundreds of businesses and communities, and it has been co-written by industry representatives, local authorities, VisitScotland, SOSE, businesses, enterprises and communities. It harnesses our collective ambition, passion, and enthusiasm to build a destination of first choice – first choice for visitors, first choice for investment and first choice for business.

Scale and ambition are key to the successful delivery of this strategy. To achieve the ambition we set, we need to do more to develop game-changing, large-scale, compelling propositions which inspire public support and private investment.

Crucially, this strategy is more than just a plan. It is a rallying call for all those who want to see economic transformation in the South of Scotland to come together, work together, and succeed together. It is a solemn commitment from all our public agencies, businesses, enterprises and communities that we will do what it takes to supercharge our visitor economy, for the benefit of all, including generations to come.



This strategy is not just about tourism, hospitality or events; rather, it takes a holistic view of our visitor economy in its totality.

## Understanding the 'visitor economy':

The visitor economy is a place-centred concept, it is about the whole environment in which visitors, locals and tourists interact. It is the sum economic benefit of bringing visitors into an area: not just the accommodation, attractions and restaurants but the wider goods and services – the local butcher, the newsagent, the launderette, the petrol station. These secondary businesses and enterprises may not consider themselves as 'tourism businesses', *per se*, but they are an integral part of the visitor economy. Many of the facilities and attractions local communities enjoy are made viable by visitors. A thriving visitor economy benefits all.

## History:

The South of Scotland's visitor economy dates back almost two centuries, when the railways first linked the historic towns and abbeys of the Scottish Borders with Edinburgh and then into Dumfries and Galloway, and as first Portpatrick and then Stranraer became the main Scottish port for ferries to Ireland. These new transport links, combined with raised and romanticised awareness of the beauties of the South of Scotland, fuelled by the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns and James Hogg, stimulated demand for accommodation and a range of visitor activities across the towns and villages of the south, creating new resorts and attracting visitors in their thousands.

## Contemporary identity:

As the world has changed around us, the South of Scotland has retained its unique charm and identity as a rural, rolling, romantic destination. Our region spans the English border, with Irish and North Sea coastlines, and outstanding natural landscapes, uplands, rivers and seascapes. We have an abundance of open space and dark skies, and we are committed to safeguarding our natural capital. Our industrial heritage is linked to farming, fishing, forestry, textiles, food and drink. Our distinct cultures and places are shaped by centuries of history and landmark events, often due to being a contested borderland. We are a vibrant and fiercely proud community with a rich and diverse tapestry of people and businesses, thriving artists and creative minds, and we have a passion for embracing the great outdoors, adventure, leisure and sport. We also have a strong track record in third sector and community-led tourism initiatives which help our communities be even better places to live work and visit.

**Our point of differentiation as a destination is our geographic location: we are a sparsely populated, welcoming, rural escape within 2-4 hours travel of 14m people. Our message to those arriving from south of the border is: 'Scotland Starts Here'.**

**Visitors, value and volume:**

Our visitors largely originate from the domestic UK market, but close proximity to the ferries from Newcastle and Hull provide access to near European markets. Our market-share of wider international, higher-spending visitors to Scotland is currently very low but, with airports at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Prestwick, Newcastle and Manchester, has potential for significant growth.

The most recent findings from the Scottish Tourism Index states that the top two activities undertaken on 2023 home holidays were ‘rest and relaxation’ at 63% and ‘visits to the outdoors’ at 51%. These provide an excellent match for what the South of Scotland has to offer.

As happened worldwide, the onset of the Covid pandemic had an adverse impact upon the tourism industry, with large reductions in visitor numbers and loss of economic impact across the South of Scotland in 2020. The South of Scotland Destination Alliance established a five-year, 2020-2025 Covid-recovery plan, aiming to reach a visitor economy of £750m and increasing jobs by 6,500. According to 2022 STEAM data, both targets were achieved two years ahead of schedule.

Together, we now look to build on this remarkable, double-time Covid recovery, by looking forwards with unfettered ambition at what we can achieve in this coming decade.

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**TOURISM TRENDS IN THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND 2018 - 2022**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Visitor Numbers (million)	4.46	4.64	1.85	2.84	4.13
Total Economic Impact (£m)	£574m	£610m	£253m	£465m	£762m
Employment (FTE)	11,797	12,036	6,623	10,695	13,759

Source STEAM data 2018 - 2023

# Our Responsibilities:

## This is a Responsible Tourism Strategy.

Responsible tourism isn't just about holidaying in an environmentally-friendly way. It is about making better places for people to visit and live in. It minimises any negative economic, environmental, and social impacts, ensuring that business success generates greater economic benefits for local people, enhances the well-being of communities and actively preserves an area's natural and cultural heritage.

## We are responsible to:

- [Our communities](#)
- [Our climate](#)
- [Our natural capital](#)
- [Our culture](#)
- [Our visitors](#)
- [Our children](#)
- [Our workforce](#)

Rapid, unsustainable growth which exceeds infrastructure capacities and community appetite, saturates and devalues our place and product, and damages our natural capital, is *not* responsible tourism.

## Responsible tourism:

- Creates collective economic prosperity and community benefit
- Supports quality, year-round employment
- Maximises positive economic, environmental and social impact
- Ensures the correct infrastructure and services are in place before seeking growth in visitor numbers
- Embraces our communities as key players in the visitor economy
- Supports and educates visitors to respect our communities, nature and landscape
- Slows visitors down, so they linger longer
- Supports local enterprises and prioritises food and drink of local provenance
- Provides a high quality, authentic experience for visitors which exceeds expectations
- Champions accessibility, inclusion and diversity
- Is culturally sensitive and builds local pride and confidence
- Has local ownership, community leadership, collaboration and partnership at its core
- Enhances our natural capital and actively contributes to our march to Net Zero
- Prioritises long-term, sustainable benefit for all, over short-term economic growth for the few.

# Our Strategic Context:

 [BACK TO MENU](#)

In keeping with our commitment to partnership and collaboration, this South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy is embedded in its wider strategic context. It is informed by, dovetails with, and contributes to the delivery of, more than a dozen different existing national and local strategies.



Through this Responsible Tourism Strategy, we aspire to:

- **increase our visitor economy by £1 billion**, to £1.76bn by 2034
- **support a further 6,000 jobs**, to 20,000 FTE posts by 2034

This is unprecedented ambition for the South of Scotland.

To achieve this growth responsibly, we cannot simply rely on attracting more domestic, summer visitors, when many businesses and enterprises are already at capacity. Rather, we must:

## a) Become a year-round destination:

Through targeted marketing, strategic messaging, and locally-led destination development we will work collaboratively to attract more visitors in the shoulder and winter seasons, where there is capacity for growth. To extend the season we will particularly target those within four hours' travel of the region, promoting the South of Scotland as a year-round destination which shines in all seasons. We must work collaboratively and supportively at a local level, to ensure we have the right products and services open for visitors as we increase off-season visitor numbers.

## b) Become a 'go to' rather than a 'go through' a destination:

Significant numbers of visitors pass through the South of Scotland on their way to other areas, most especially on the M74, A68, A7 and A1. This is because they do not yet see the South of Scotland as a destination. We can change this by bringing alive our collective consumer-facing brand 'Scotland Starts Here', including through strategic partnerships at Gretna, to get people to come off the M74 and learn about all our region has to offer. We can use our unique geographic position and proximity to major urban centres, to attract new and higher spending visitors.

## c) Radically increase international visitor numbers:

International visitors stay for longer and spend significantly more than domestic visitors. They are key to achieving significant, responsible growth because they allow us to double the value of our visitor economy without doubling the volume of visitors and risking saturation. We will target the high-spending North American market by capitalising on the unique history of emigration from Lowland Scotland, to catalyse game-changing growth in our visitor economy. We will use the ferry crossings in Cairnryan in the west, and Newcastle to the south-east, to bring in new visitors from the island of Ireland and the Low Countries and Germany, respectively. Crucially, once we have attracted new international visitors, we must retain them in the South of Scotland, disrupting the gravitational pull which has historically drawn visitors to the central belt and Highlands. We will offer high quality, connected itineraries which see visitors stay in, or move across, the South of Scotland.

To achieve these three growth-levers we must invest in building reasons to visit the South of Scotland. We must raise our voice, build our brand, and better tell our story. We must develop a series of compelling and connected attractions and offerings which attract and inspire high-spending visitors.

Crucially, we recognise the importance of a wellbeing economy, as set out in Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation. So, in addition to total economic impact and new jobs created, we will work with others to develop innovative and insightful wellbeing indicators, to ensure this strategy delivers inclusive prosperity for *all* the South of Scotland's people and places.

# Our Target Markets and Segments:

In an increasingly dynamic global market, in which new trends and visitor flows are fast emerging, it is important this ten-year strategy does not prescribe too rigidly our target markets for the South of Scotland to 2034. Rather, we must be alert to the changing landscape, actively seeking market insights; we must be agile, innovative and responsive to a changing world.

We want the South of Scotland to have a well-balanced market portfolio, minimising over reliance on any one market.

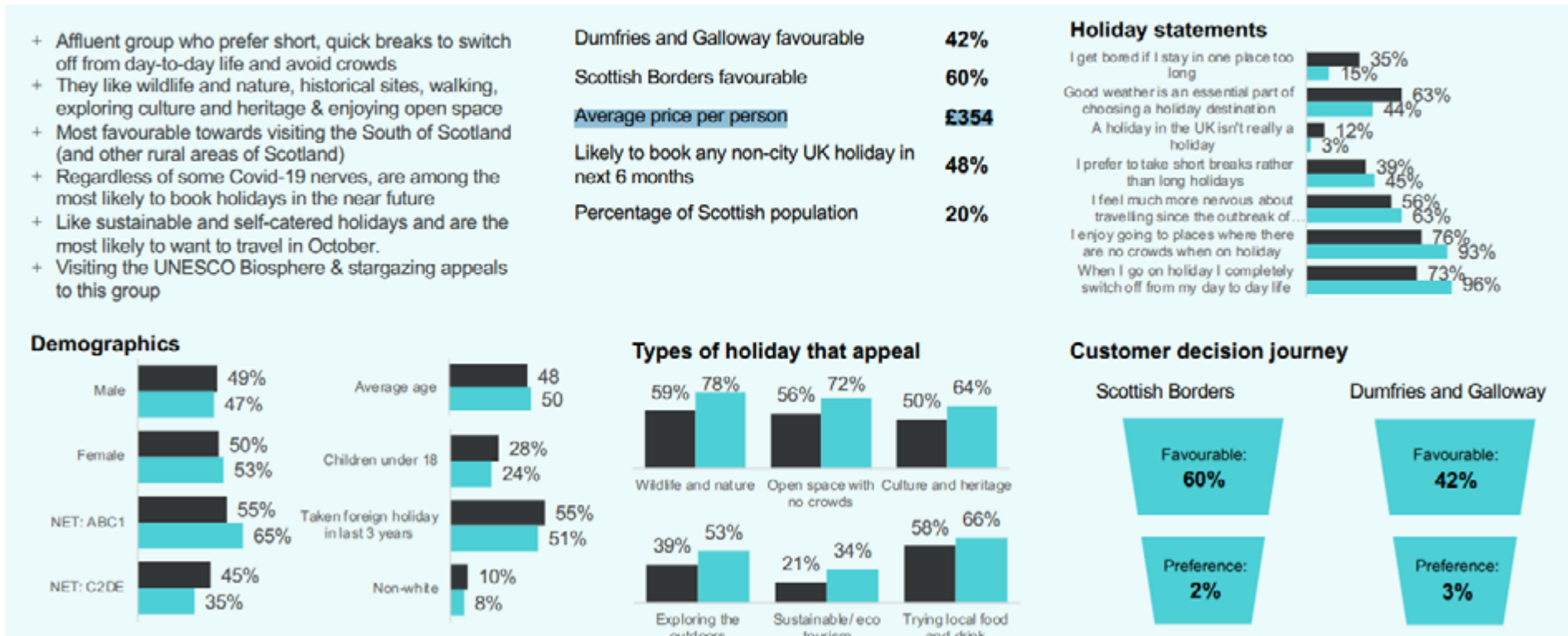


**Domestic:**

Our primary market will remain domestic visitors within 2-4 hours travel of the region. In this market we will particularly target ‘metropolitan adventurers’: this is an affluent segment of the market which makes up 14% of the population, who prefer short breaks, want to switch off from the day-to-day, and like the great outdoors, nature, culture and heritage. This segment aligns well with the core activities most associated with South of Scotland: exploring and wildlife, walking, cycling, visiting historical sites, food and drink, local arts, crafts and culture, and exploring galleries and museums<sup>1</sup>.

# Metropolitan adventurers: 14% of the UK population

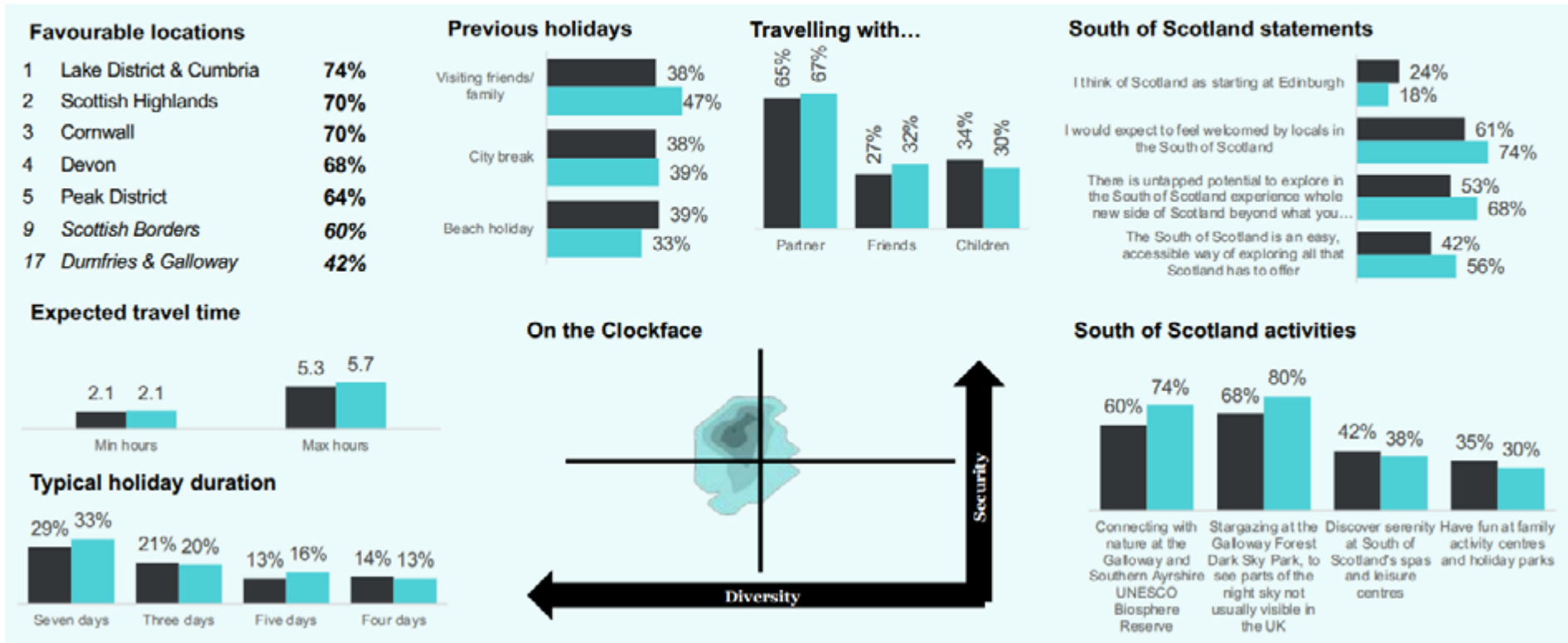
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<sup>1</sup> Source: South of Scotland Segmentation research by Yonder, October 2021

# Metropolitan adventurers: 14% of the UK population

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1 Source: South of Scotland Segmentation research by Yonder, October 2021



# The right segment...

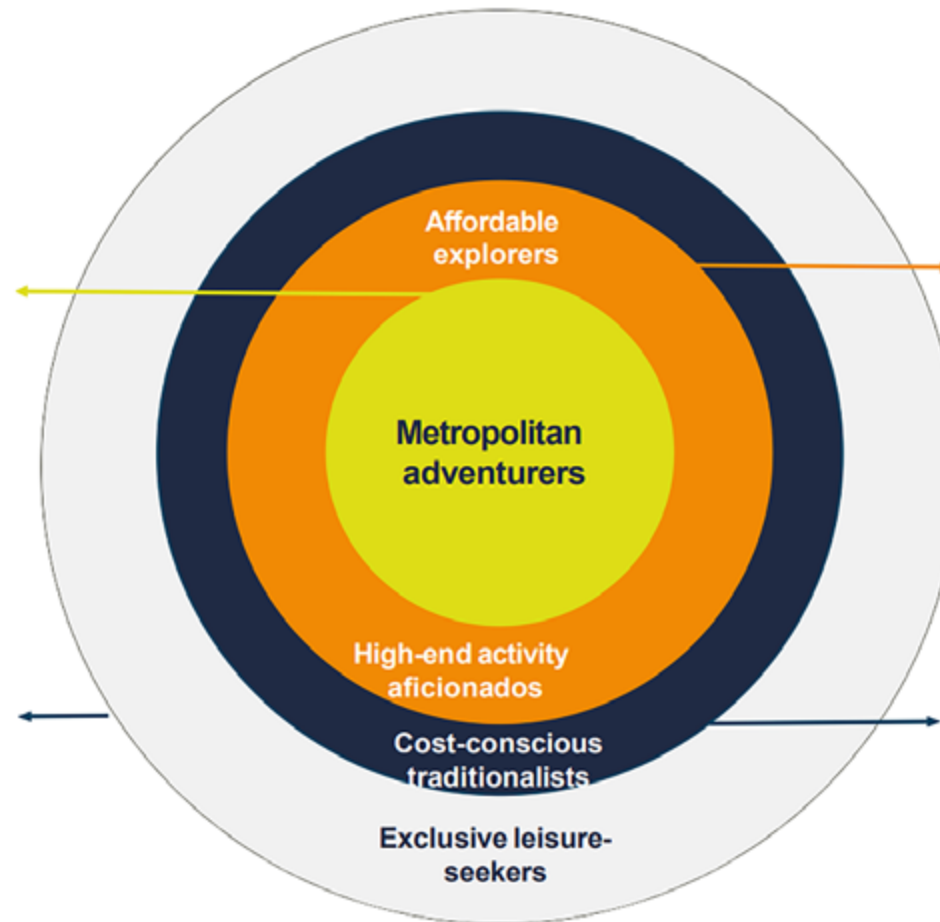
While 'metropolitan adventurers' will be our primary target segment, our secondary segment will be 'affordable explorers' and 'high-end activity aficionados', tertiary will be 'cost-conscious traditionalists' and longer term we will look to attract 'exclusive leisure-seekers'.

## Primary

- Affluent; prefer short breaks to switch off from day-to-day
- Like outdoor / nature, walking, culture & heritage
- Most positive towards the South of Scotland and its activities, and passionate about sustainability.

## Longer term

- Older; will pay for luxury
- Spontaneous
- Prefer shorter breaks
- Least likely to travel with children



## Secondary

Affordable explorers:

- Prefer longer & active breaks
- Not into luxury holidays.

High-end activity aficionados:

- Seek nice weather
- Economically stable, more into treating themselves
- Easily bored so needs activity and likes to move around

## Tertiary

- Least affluent
- Often women seeking inexpensive, child friendly holidays
- Prioritise good weather
- Least likely to book non-city UK holiday.



Max hours willing to travel (approx hrs)

5.7	<b>Metropolitan adventurers</b> 5.8M 'considerers' worth £2.1 billion 3.5M 'existing' worth £1.3 billion	CORE AUDIENCE
6	<b>Affordable explorers</b> 3.7M 'considerers' worth £1.3 billion 2.4M 'existing' worth £915 million	
5.2	<b>High-end activity aficionados</b> 6.0M 'considerers' worth £2.4 billion 4.0M 'existing' worth £1.7 billion	
4.9	<b>Cost-conscious traditionalists</b> 5.5M 'considerers' worth £1.7 billion 3.9M 'existing' worth £1.5 billion	
5.5	<b>Exclusive leisure-seekers</b> 4.2M 'considerers' worth £1.7 billion 3.9M 'existing' worth £1.7 billion	LONGER TERM

Source: SSSA Segmentation research - Oct, 2021  
 'Considerers' likely to go on non-city UK hol and favourable to SoS  
 'Existing' those who have previously visited SoS

**International:**

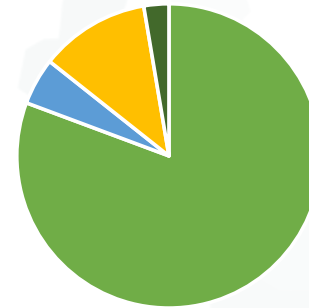
Currently just 6% of overnight visitors to the South of Scotland are international, compared to a 22% Scotland-average. This is striking given most of the region is within 90 minutes of an international airport, and it is significant given international visitors typically spend twice as much a day, compared to domestic visitors.

In 2022 19% of visitors to Scotland were international, yet 49% of spend came from international visitors, with over half of all international spend coming from North America visitors. It looks like this trend will have continued in 2023, with considerable further increase in US spend.

We will grow the South of Scotland's international market-share by specifically targeting:

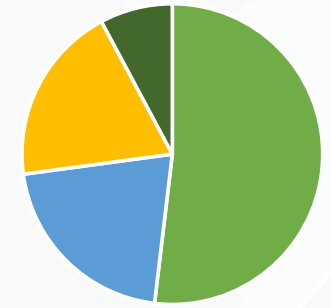
- North America: Leveraging our region's story of emigration and targeting those with Scots-Irish ancestry.
- Europe: Particularly targeting the self-drive German and Dutch markets, arriving by ferry into Newcastle.
- Asia: With the Chinese market forecast to reopen in earnest from 2025.

**Scotland Visits**



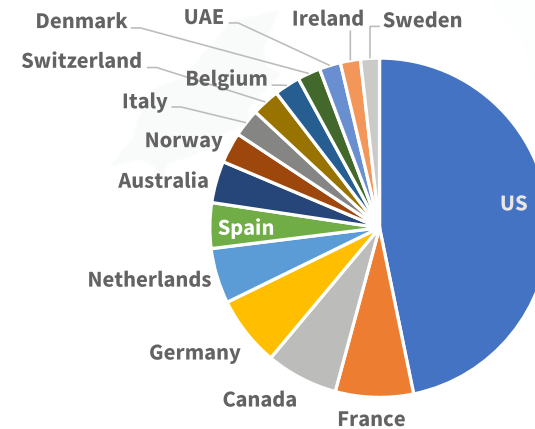
■ GB ■ North America  
■ Europe ■ Rest of World

**Scotland Spend**



■ GB ■ North America  
■ Europe ■ Rest of World

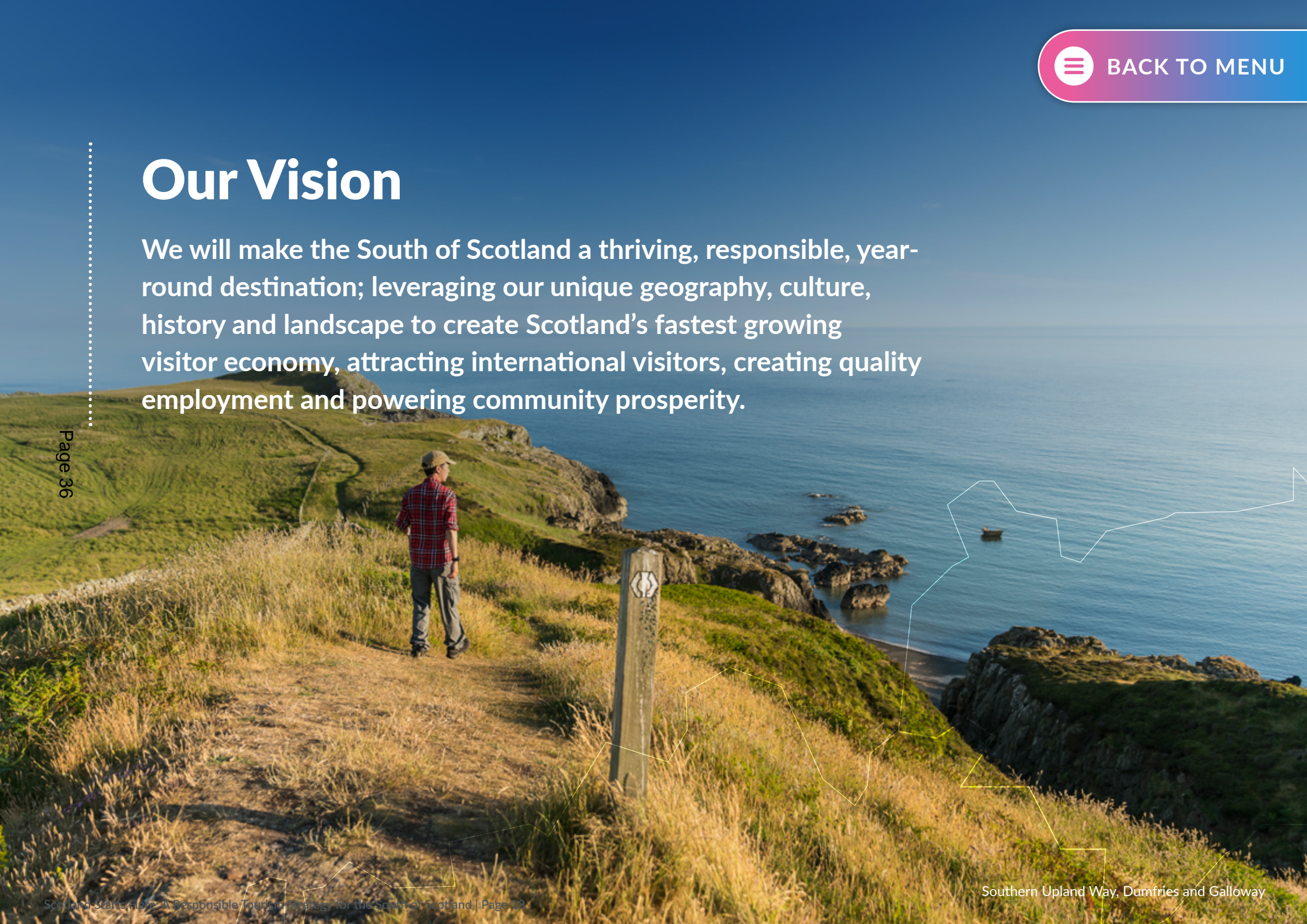
**Spend by Top 15 Countries (80% of Int'l spend)**



Source: GBTS 2022, IPS 2022

# Our Vision

We will make the South of Scotland a thriving, responsible, year-round destination; leveraging our unique geography, culture, history and landscape to create Scotland's fastest growing visitor economy, attracting international visitors, creating quality employment and powering community prosperity.



## Our strategic objectives:

To achieve our vision, we will:

1. **Inspire visitors** to come to the South of Scotland
2. **Develop the visitor experience** with a focus on quality
3. **Support business** to succeed
4. **Act responsibly** for long-term collective benefit

## Our Commitments:

For each of the above four strategic objectives, this strategy sets out a handful of key delivery areas we will prioritise over the next decade, all of which have come from listening to businesses and communities across the South of Scotland.

In each delivery area, we give examples of the sort of actions we will be taking over the coming decade. However, sitting behind the strategy is a far more comprehensive series of three-year Action Plans. These plans go through in detail exactly what actions each organisation is responsible for, over the coming three years, to deliver each component of the strategy. They will be updated and shared publicly on an annual basis, with an annual progress report. We are committed to transparency and accountability.

This Strategy is co-authored by: SOSE, the SSDA, VisitScotland, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council. Together, we commit to achieving our shared vision for the future of the South of Scotland's Visitor Economy.

Crucially, this strategy is owned, and will be delivered by, many more organisations than these five co-authors. To succeed, it must be owned and collectively delivered by all relevant organisations across the public, private and third sector.

This strategy is of, for and by 'Team South of Scotland'.

## Our Capacity:

We recognise that achieving the hugely ambitious vision we set out in this strategy will require dedicated capacity.

We want a responsible visitor economy which delivers sustained collective benefit for the South of Scotland. This cannot be achieved without appropriate funding.

We will build on the success of the region in securing resources to develop projects of national significance including the creation of Borders Rail, developments related to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal including Destination Tweed, Stranraer Harbour and the 7Stanes, and the hosting of major events including the UCI World Cycling Championships 2023.

We want to develop a genuinely sustainable funding model to achieve this collective good and will think innovatively, but practically, about how to achieve this. We will establish a Funding Working Group, with representatives from each of the partner agencies, to develop, share and report back against this model. We must be open-minded and far-sighted, thinking differently about how we secure the necessary resource for the common good.

# 1. Inspire visitors to come to the South of Scotland

We need to connect with our visitor markets, both domestic and international, telling the story of the South of Scotland as a world-class destination, with pride and passion, to inspire each new generation of visitor.

The South of Scotland has much to offer and is uniquely well positioned to be the 'go to' rural destination for the 14 million people within 2-4 hours travel of the region.

We are a welcoming, green, authentic, rural escape: these are sought-after attributes in an increasingly busy, noisy, time-poor, stressed, urban and digital world.

Visitors have the space and freedom to relax and unwind how they wish: whether through quiet rural immersion, engaging our unique culture and heritage, or embracing our outdoor and adventure offerings.

We need to be more discoverable and better communicate the emotional benefits of visiting the region.

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## Developing the Destination Position and Profile:

Put simply, we need to disrupt the habit of visitors bypassing the South of Scotland. Our profile is low; visitors are not aware of, or emotionally engaged enough with, what we have to offer. We need to make the destination 'stickier' to encourage them to visit – but visitors need to know about us, what the benefits are and why they should visit. We need to bring our collective 'Scotland Starts Here' destination brand alive to reflect our culture, history, heritage, people and natural environment.

We will do this by:

- Developing our collective marketing approach with key target markets and segments to attract higher spending visitors who stay longer, with clear and consistent messaging to help build brand awareness and emotional connections
- Ensuring more of our visitor experiences are digitally discoverable and bookable
- Encouraging and supporting our businesses, enterprises and communities to adopt the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding and feed into the design and delivery of marketing campaigns through the SSDA, so this becomes our collective voice
- Making the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding significantly more visible within the region
- Sustained long-term financial commitment to marketing the region
- Creating effective digital means to track attitudes to holidaying in our region by our target markets.



## Develop a year-round destination:

We currently have a comparatively short season. Extending the season will provide greater economic benefit and enhanced year-round employment. Having capacity throughout the year and across the region provides the opportunity to spread visitors seasonally and geographically. Extending the season is not an easy task and will not happen overnight: not all businesses wish to open year-round. It will require a collective approach taking incremental steps to get there. We need to bring new visitors in through the shoulder months and off-season, and ensure there is a quality experience for them in the destination when they do.

We will do this by:

- Undertaking a baseline seasonality audit and track progress annually
- Facilitating local collaboration between businesses to support the development of a year-round offering, in which visitors can be signposted to attractions, restaurants and accommodation which are open, whenever they visit
- Identifying potential clusters – these could be locations, themes, activities, events – and work with businesses and communities to develop a seasonal offer, where relevant maximising our natural capital
- Market the region as a year-round destination, highlighting the key offerings in each season to relevant target segments within a 2-4 hour drive.

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## Inspire the travel trade to the potential of the region:

There is already a compelling South of Scotland product for the travel trade, but more needs to be done to reach a critical 'tipping point' where tour operators see the quantity and quality available for them to include the region in their programmes. There is a requirement to enable more tourism businesses and enterprises to become travel trade ready to appeal to operators programming individuals, small groups and, as relevant, coach parties. Consideration needs to be given to developing more responsible products to satisfy the requests tour operators are receiving from their own customers.

We will do this by:

- Developing and delivering a programme for businesses comprising travel trade training, 1:1 bespoke support and funding opportunities for businesses to allow them to promote to the trade. This programme should include how responsible products might be developed and taken to market
- Enhancing the travel trade portal on SSDA, with new content and listings and take this to the travel trade market
- Representation of the region by the SSDA at travel trade events, with dedicated capacity to manage key relationships with the travel trade, organise educational visits, help develop new products, etc
- Utilise the expertise of VisitScotland in supporting tourism businesses to develop bookable experiences to new and existing markets through activity including VisitScotland Connect
- Tracking % of international visitors and number of businesses that are part of the SSDA travel trade offering.

## Leverage our designations, accolades and awards:

It is important to make the best possible use of our key assets, to raise awareness of our destination and inspire visitors:

Designations: We value our internationally recognised designations, such as: the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, the Galloway Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier), and the Moffat Dark Sky Community, alongside our outstanding National Scenic Areas, Local Landscape Areas, and Wildlife and Marine Reserves. By upholding these designations, we highlight our rich natural and cultural heritage, attract visitors seeking authentic experiences, foster a profound connection with our environment, and promote stewardship and accountability among all tourism stakeholders.

Accolades: The South of Scotland is increasingly securing prestigious global accolades, for example: it was awarded a coveted UCI Bike Region label in 2023; it was named 'Best in Travel 2023' by Lonely Planet; and the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere featured on the National Geographic 'Cool List 2024' and is part of the world's first UNESCO trail.

Awards: In 2023 the regional South of Scotland Thistle Awards was created not only to inspire and recognise excellence within the industry but also to enhance the region's reputation as a must-visit destination. This had immediate impact, with, for the first time ever, the South of Scotland winning more national Thistle Awards than any other part of Scotland in 2023. Through strategic collaboration and continuous support, the South of Scotland Thistle Awards play a vital role in defining the region's unique tourism offering, fostering growth, ensuring unforgettable experiences and repeat visits.

We need to continue to secure such designations, accolades and awards, and leverage maximum benefit for the visitor economy when we do.

We will do this by:

- Actively engaging with the media to showcase the best of the South of Scotland to garner further 'best in class' accolades
- Actively using our accolades and designations in our destination marketing activity – targeting segments as relevant
- Where appropriate, using our designations -such as the UNESCO biosphere- to pilot new ways of responsible business practice
- Securing the new Scottish Dark Sky Observatory in the Galloway Forest Park, to better leverage the economic benefits of the Galloway Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier).

## Game-changing ambition to attract international visitors:

While most of our efforts should be focused on the incremental, tangible actions which will gradually bring about progress, we also want to think ambitiously about what would be genuinely transformative for the South of Scotland's visitor economy.

We need to build greater ambition into our thinking and planning, such that we can collaboratively develop responsible, large-scale, compelling propositions which inspire not just public sector support but also significant private inward investment. We need to build reasons to visit the South of Scotland which are not just regionally significant, but nationally and internationally. Borderlands and the Borders Railway are just two examples of this sort of thinking and we need more at this scale.

We know that as a rural destination we have limited capacity, infrastructure, and appetite for mass tourism, so to radically transform the visitor economy we need to attract more high-spending visitors who stay longer.

Most of the c25 million North Americans with Scottish ancestry came from the lowlands of Scotland: this gives us a unique opportunity to tell the story

of Scottish emigration, which has the South at its heart. We need to think with unprecedented ambition about how we tell this story to the world in ways that inspire people to visit and be a part of this story.

We will do this by:

- Capitalising on the story of lowland emigration by building an iconic, totemic, national flagship visitor attraction in the South of Scotland, designed to attract higher spending international visitors
- Build a 'stepping stone' pathway of satellite attractions and related stories (the birth of Christianity in the UK at Whithorn, Burns at Dumfries, etc) to encourage international visitors to move west-east across the region, rather than travel up to the central belt and Highlands
- Embracing, and being ready for, other game-changing opportunities including the potential for a National Park and a significantly strengthened Burns tourism product through the Burns Tourism Partnership
- Position ourselves to maximise the chance of attracting significant and game-changing investment

## 2. Develop the visitor experience, with a focus on quality

To elevate our offer as a destination, we need to increase the number and quality of visitor experiences. We need to encourage entrepreneurship in the development of new attractions, whilst ensuring that training and advice are available to those already operating in the industry to enhance quality. We need to facilitate new ideas and collaborations amongst businesses, enterprises and communities, so the South of Scotland becomes an easy destination to visit, with one experience directly leading to the next, such that visitors stay longer and spend more.

### Quality:

Increasingly, visitors are looking for quality experiences across every part of their trip: attractions, accommodation, food and drink. We need to build quality into every part of the South of Scotland's offering: it needs to be built into our DNA if we are to establish a reputation for quality. We have many outstanding businesses which are shining beacons of quality but we also have many others that need to be supported to reach this level. As a destination, we need to ensure that we do not stand still, instead encouraging and supporting our tourism businesses to improve the quality of their offering across the region.

We will do this by:

- Curating existing, and developing new, training and mentoring programmes that focus on raising the quality of the visitor experience at a regional and national level
- Continuing to develop and promote the South of Scotland Thistle Awards, to inspire and celebrate quality and excellence
- Developing peer-sharing systems and case studies to share learning between businesses
- Promoting the South of Scotland as a quality destination to our target markets
- Actively supporting businesses to improve the quality of their food and drink offering, with systems established to make it easier to use local ingredients and products.



## Growth and Development Hubs:

There is a need to think strategically about how to grow and develop the South of Scotland as a destination and to maximise the impact of projects linked to Borderlands Inclusive Growth investment. The region has a number of key assets, linked to its unique geography, culture and history, which can become catalytic growth centres with the right investment and collaboration. Together these areas become the story we tell about the South of Scotland and determine the visitors we attract.

These areas may include, *inter alia*:

- Cycling – building on the UCI Bike Region, Kirkpatrick C2C, Galloway Gravel, etc to make the South of Scotland the UK's leading cycle-destination
- Literary tourism – investing in literary history including Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, J.M. Barrie, and our two renowned book festivals
- Dark Skies – using our dark skies status as a key attraction to extend the season
- Agritourism and Food & Drink – building our reputation as a leading rural destination with outstanding local products
- Equestrian – establishing the South as the equestrian capital of the UK to attract high-spending visitors
- Film and TV – showcasing the destination as a filming location and building visitors from this
- History and heritage – including our unique Roman, Iron Age and early Christian history, and rich textile heritage.

We will do this by:

- Systematically identifying key growth hubs and developing stakeholder working groups for each, with agreed outcomes and clear timescales to develop the offering, inspire new bookable products and bring in new audiences
- Developing a tourism 'incubator' programme to provide a space for collaborative ideas to be developed into new quality visitor experiences
- Golf and country sports – better connecting-up our various offerings and building our destination brand, to bring in more off-season visitors.



## Visitor Information:

Visitors need to be able to access information easily during the planning and booking phase, and throughout their visit. Our visitor information needs to be clear, consistent, and centrally held in a digital one-stop shop – ‘Scotland Starts Here’. Visitors need to be able to digitally discover the region and book the various elements of their trip in one simple step. This information needs to be accessible, inspiring and accurate to ensure views convert to bookings.

Whilst in the destination, visitors need to be signposted to relevant digital information, with effective online booking for experiences etc, so visitors stay longer and spend more.

We will do this by:

- Reviewing current visitor information usage and effectiveness, with clear development plan agreed
- Encouraging and facilitating collaboration between businesses and making the product more connected, to make it easier for visitors to find and book joined-up experiences and to linger longer
- Ensuring every visitor economy business is listed on ‘Scotland Starts Here’ and is supported to keep their listing up to date
- Integrating ‘Scotland Starts Here’ with other sources of visitor information across the region
- Ensuring ‘Scotland Starts Here’ branding, with QR codes directing to the website and app, is visible across the region.



## Events:

Events provide a reason to visit. They play an important role in a visitor's experience of a destination, with cultural or community events allowing the visitor to connect in an authentic way. The South of Scotland has a good calendar of events during peak season but is light on events at other times of the year. There is a need to improve how we connect events with the visitor economy such that those who come into the region for an event are encouraged to stay longer in the destination.

We will do this by:

- Developing the festivals, music and events content on 'Scotland Starts Here' and using events to engage with our visitors
- Linking the two Local Authority Events Strategies and the new National Events Strategy directly with the relevant actions in this strategy
- Building on learnings from the recent hosting of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in the region, with a view to hosting similar events of scale
- Supporting those attending events to stay longer and spend more in the region
- Encouraging the creation of further out of season events, as part of our ambitions to develop a year-round destination
- Connecting existing, or encouraging new, events to create themed festivals, linked to the established strengths of the region.



## Accommodation:

It is crucial we have the right accommodation, in the right place, at the right price-point, if we are to grow our visitor economy.

VisitScotland acknowledge that the sample sizes at regional level in their Accommodation Occupancy Survey are small, particularly in areas such as D&G and Scottish Borders. It is therefore difficult to get an accurate annual picture on occupancy.

SOSE's 2021 bed-stock audit, provides a snapshot in time of what is available to visitors, although it will have evolved since then, not least as a result of the Short-term Let Licensing. As of December 2021, the bed-stock in the South of Scotland comprised:

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- 4,711 accommodation properties
- 27,342 bedrooms or units (mainly pitches) and
- 70,014 beds

The number of properties is dominated by self-catering (76%) but the majority of bedspaces – which better reflects the number of visitors who can be accommodated – are provided by camping and caravan providers, at 57%, due to their considerably larger capacity.

It is clear that some events suffer from a lack of accommodation for visiting attendees. Encouraging more people to dwell and stay overnight would be of economic benefit to communities. The pop-up campsites for the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in the Tweed Valley provided an interesting case study of what might be possible for other events.

There are few accommodation properties suited to the groups market and whilst this limits opportunities to work with elements of the travel trade, there is a stronger opportunity to develop activity with FIT operators focussing on smaller accommodation businesses.

There is a need to better understand the accommodation sector and match it to the needs and preferences of visitor segments, ensuring we have a diverse range of accommodation, at appropriate scale, to meet demand at different price points from five star to holiday parks; offering quality and value at every level.

We will do this by:

- Better understanding what visitors want and encouraging investment in new bed-stock to meet these needs and opportunities
- Improving the quality and resilience of accommodation data for the South of Scotland through encouraging and incentivising local businesses and enterprises to participate in accommodation occupancy surveys
- Developing a framework on how best to facilitate temporary campsites for events considering the impact on/benefit to communities
- Increasing the amount of travel trade ready accommodation.
- Attracting external investment to create increased capacity and quality.



## Infrastructure:

Tourism can only succeed where the right infrastructure is in place. For the South of Scotland, this includes: an effective integrated public transport network (bus and rail), a well-maintained road network which is safe for active travel, an EV charging network which makes all parts of the destination accessible by electric vehicle, road and street signage, 4G and 5G digital connectivity, accessible public toilets in good repair, and appropriate public bins and street recycling.

Amongst the most important infrastructure for the visitor economy in the South of Scotland is the trunk road network which is necessary for visitors to arrive into and travel across the destination. It is vital that there is further investment in the key routes, including the M74, A75, A77, A1, A7, A67 and A68.

With specific regard to our region's local food and drink offering, there is a need to develop the necessary supporting industry, including an effective distribution network, a distribution centre, and an abattoir.

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund is designed to support collaborative projects which focus on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that are facing pressure on their infrastructure and communities as a result of visitor numbers. The types of projects that could be supported include parking, motorhome facilities (including disposal points), viewpoints, paths, toilet provision and EV and e-bike charge points. Priority will be given to early actions identified by Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans.

Significant new public funded initiatives emerging from Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal such as Destination Tweed, Stranraer Harbour, 7stanes and the Glentress Masterplan can be used as a catalyst to

unlock further tourism potential for entrepreneurial tourism businesses, communities and ultimately the visitor.

We have an opportunity to build upon the success of the long-term ambition and blueprints of the Borders Rail project and current plans for Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal projects. We need to identify the infrastructure gaps and solutions, whilst providing support for the industry and working more effectively with policymakers to improve the infrastructure for our businesses and visitors.

We will do this by:

- Developing a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for the region identifying key areas for improvement
- Applying for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to take forward key priorities
- Fully integrating this Responsible Tourism Strategy into the Regional Economic Strategy and ensuring the visitor economy's infrastructure needs are recognised within the Regional Economic Partnership and the Convention of the South of Scotland
- Establishing effective logistics and distribution systems to support businesses to use local ingredients
- Establishing an EV charging network integral within the visitor economy, with charging stations at most accommodation and visitor attractions
- Identifying locations where the provision of toilet facilities and bins can be improved and work with partners and communities to find locally-appropriate solutions.

## Inward investment:

Developing our bed-stock, visitor attractions and food and drink offerings requires the South of Scotland to attract significant inward investment. To achieve this, we must make the South of Scotland an investment-friendly region: ensuring we have a skilled workforce, a resilient local economy, and the right incentives, such that businesses succeed. With a partnership approach, we have an opportunity to work together for the good of the region and develop a stronger collective understanding of planning, licensing and regulations. This approach will help to position the region to new investment and development in a cohesive manner.

Most importantly, we must set the collective tone, vision and ambition for the South of Scotland's visitor economy. We make no apology for the fact that this strategy charts a hugely ambitious path to sustained, game-changing growth in our visitor economy. We have set a bold vision, which we *will* achieve. Articulating this vision and showing clear leadership, allows us to invite appropriate investors to join us on this journey of growth and prosperity.

In recent years there have been significant investments into the region, including for example Borders Railway and the five-star SCHLOSS Roxburgh in the Scottish Borders. We must ensure that these investments succeed, if we wish others to follow.

We will do this by:

- Identifying key strategic opportunities for investment and working together to offer the right package of business support to secure appropriate investment
- Establish sustained, open communication channels which allow us to listen to businesses and prospective investors, so we understand and can address potential blockers and impediments to investments
- Establish integrated efficient systems with the two local authorities to ensure that significant prospective investments are well supported through planning and licensing, in an effective and timely way
- Maximising current tourism investment pipeline opportunities linked to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Edinburgh and South-east Scotland City Regional – Regional Prosperity Framework and Levelling Up funding to develop the visitor experience.

### 3. Support business to succeed:

Without businesses and enterprises there would be no visitor economy. We must support them to succeed.

The years leading up to this strategy were a uniquely challenging business environment, with Brexit, Covid, cost of living (and doing business), rising energy costs, new regulations, and increasing business rates. If we want a thriving visitor economy we must get behind businesses. Their success is our success.

The visitor economy is like a bar stool with three legs: the private sector, the public sector and communities/the third sector. To succeed, all three must support, and benefit from, the visitor economy. We must build a culture of mutual support and collective endeavour, dismantling any barriers of mutual suspicion.

The public sector needs to create the conditions for businesses and enterprises to thrive; it benefits from their success through tax receipts and collective prosperity. Communities need to get behind businesses and welcome visitors; they benefit from the jobs created and local products and services sustained by tourism. And business needs to work closely with community interests and ensure that their success is putting back into the local economy, with tangible community benefit.



Stranraer Harbour, Dumfries and Galloway

## Collaboration and Support:

Effective collaboration and mutual support is key to success. We need to use the collective strength of all partners – local, regional and national - to support our businesses and allow them to flourish in welcoming our visitors. We want to make it easier for businesses to thrive. Key elements of support will include helping businesses be digitally discoverable and bookable, improving quality, contributing to, and accessing, data and supporting businesses on their Net Zero journey.

We will do this by:

- Having a strong, effective and well-supported destination management and marketing organisation which functions as an inclusive network representing and supporting all of the visitor economy.
- Building mutual understanding between the private and public sector, with informed decision-making, unblocking investment pipelines by having direct channels to resolve issues in planning and licensing, and easing bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring that regulation is proportionate and effective.
- Facilitating collaboration, sharing and peer learning between organisations, such that each individual business isn't having to reinvent solutions to the same challenges, and success breeds success.
- Developing a clear and coordinated programme of needs-led business support from all organisations (SSDA, VS, SDS, Business Gateway, SOSE, LAs, Scotland Food & Drink, etc), so businesses know exactly what support is available where and are able to easily tap into it.
- Developing a locally-led approach to destination development by regularly bringing together businesses and communities to understand, and respond to, local priorities and to allow towns to showcase their unique identities.



## Representation:

It is all too easy for well-intended regulation or investment to have unintended negative consequences if either communities or local businesses and enterprises are not well listened to or understood. As partners, we therefore commit to active listening and engagement with the industry and with communities, to understand their needs, concerns and priorities. We will have clear systems to ensure these local views are formally represented and acted upon, with channels for sustained two-way dialogue, and public reporting.

We will do this by:

- Having bi-annual Locally Led Destination Development meetings in every part of the region, specifically to listen to, represent and act on the experience of local businesses and communities
- Developing specific new mechanisms for businesses to share information about how/where prospective new investments are being delayed or deterred by planning or licensing, with a quarterly review of this data by the SSDA and Council leaders to develop practical solutions
- Having bi-annual meetings between the SSDA and the senior leadership of the two local authorities, SOSE and VisitScotland, to share views heard from businesses and communities
- Bi-annually reporting back on the views and priorities communicated by business and communities, and what action has been taken
- Having the SSDA and VisitScotland actively represented on the Regional Economic Partnership.



## Workforce development:

There are many challenges in recruiting and retaining staff across the industry, including a lack of housing, seasonal employment, fair wages, and career development. Although these issues are not unique to the South of Scotland, or the tourism sector, ageing demography and early retirement means that the region has a smaller workforce than other areas – put simply, there is less of a pool of people to draw upon.

This workforce challenge is exacerbated by negative perceptions of the industry, which is putting off young people from embarking on a career in tourism and hospitality. Too often, the prevailing narrative is of poor wages, long hours, little career progression and poor mental health. This needs to change. We need to build a strong visitor economy, proudly at the heart of the community, providing quality year-round employment for a skilled local workforce.

We will do this by:

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- Developing a workforce skills plan for the South of Scotland's visitor economy
- Advocating for careers in tourism and hospitality, building respect and recognition
- Working closely with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders to have a clear and compelling package of services to support workforce development
- Looking for practical solutions to the specific shortage of trained chefs in the region
- Supporting the development of relevant qualifications and pathways, to encourage our young people to choose it as a career as they leave school
- Working directly with the two colleges in the South of Scotland to provide appropriate practical training, which is linked to industry and embedded in the South of Scotland, such that young people can train, work and stay in the region
- Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to adopt a Fair Work approach to their staffing policies to ensure that the South of Scotland is a Fair Work destination
- Establishing the South of Scotland as a year-round destination, with year-round employment.



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## Data insights sharing:

Data-led decision-making allows businesses and enterprises to embrace commercial opportunities and see what is working and what isn't, it allows investments to be targeted and successful. The uniquely dynamic business landscape means trends and insights are harder than ever to understand and act on: one businesses' experience can be radically different to the next, and a seemingly clear business trend can be reversed in a moment by sudden political, cultural or economic change. Our current data systems are not well suited to this challenging and changing business environment: we need to be collecting the right data, in the right way, in the right timescales and we need to support businesses to understand and use this data. To achieve this, we need to not try to measure everything for everyone. Rather, we need a pragmatic and needs-led approach to data, focussed on the data insights which will genuinely inform decision-making and contribute to success.

We will do this by:

- Consulting business to understand their data needs and what insights would inform successful decision-making
- Developing a regional tourism barometer that collects key data on visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction and destination awareness – to be publicly shared quarterly
- Creating a central data hub for businesses to access the latest data from relevant public sector/industry sources with easy to digest 'headlines'
- Actively supporting businesses to interpret, understand and use key data insights.



# 4. Act responsibly for long-term collective benefit

Responsible tourism is all about a collaborative approach for growing the collective value of tourism and contributing to the wellbeing economy. It does so in a way that makes better places for people to visit and live in. It maximises the positive benefits of tourism for everyone, including host communities and the environment.

Our approach to developing responsible tourism focuses on four priority areas:

- Supporting Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy
- Ensuring tourism and events are inclusive and accessible
- Embracing community-led tourism and optimising community benefits from tourism
- Supporting the protection of the South of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage.

Responsible Tourism is the golden thread that runs through this strategy and should influence every action.

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## Natural Capital:

The South of Scotland is a profoundly beautiful and diverse rural destination. As we grow our visitor economy, we must protect and help enhance our natural capital, as this is our greatest asset and our responsibility to future generations.

We must provide, and actively maintain, the necessary infrastructure for visitors to responsibly enjoy our natural world, remaining alert and responsive to environmental degradation, and building a visitor economy which has nature at its heart.

We will do this by:

- Working with communities and partner agencies to actively monitor the environmental impact of visitors in key areas and adjust practises as required
- Working collaboratively with regional partners to deliver the Natural Capital aspirations of the Regional Economic Partnership and the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme
- Measuring customer perception of access and seeking feedback on improvements to target future spend appropriately

- Working collectively to develop and support our paths network, recognising the 'hero' routes and locations and agreeing priority areas for improvement
- Investing in sustainable marine and coastal tourism
- Securing permanent funding to resource officers to work with funding bodies and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.



## Net Zero:

The Scottish Government has set an ambitious target for Scotland to become Net Zero by 2045. This strategy is committed to supporting Scotland achieve this target by helping businesses and communities to learn, adapt and benefit from their journey to Net Zero.

There are challenges in reaching Net Zero but also significant opportunities. We will develop, brand and celebrate the South of Scotland as a responsible, 'green' destination to bring in new visitors and help power our visitor economy.

As a UCI Bike Region we are already well placed to attract cycling visitors to our many routes and trails; however, we recognise that as an expansive, rural destination with limited east-west public transport, it is likely most visitors will continue to arrive by car. We therefore need to ensure we have an effective EV charging network across the region, so we are able to welcome electric vehicles.

We will do this by:

- Signing up to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism
- Creating EV charging points at accommodation and visitor attractions to allow visitors to charge their vehicles
- Influencing Scottish Power to provide the necessary power supply required at accommodation and attractions for EV charging
- Encouraging and supporting EV hire at public transport hubs
- Providing a framework to support and encourage tourism businesses on a journey to Net Zero by utilising the expertise of SSDA, SOSE, VisitScotland, FLS, NatureScot, the local authorities, and the Galloway and South Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere
- Building a destination brand which has Net Zero proudly at its heart.



Wind turbines, Dumfries and Galloway

## Community-led Tourism:

As we move with speed and ambition to grow our visitor economy we must learn from other areas' experience, ensuring we work within the infrastructure capacities of the region and maintain respect for local communities, their traditions and individual priorities. We must not only encourage and support community-benefit but also embrace community-led tourism, recognising communities as not only hosts but also delivery partners in the visitor economy. This is especially important in rural areas and helps build the South of Scotland's identity as an authentic and welcoming destination.

The South of Scotland is fast developing a reputation as a leader in community-led tourism, with many new social enterprises, community asset transfers, and community-led events and festivals. As the public purse tightens, we must support and enable innovative community-led solutions for the provision of key local services, such as public toilets and information points.

Working with SCOTO, the Scottish Community Tourism Network, we will explore ways of bringing community and business interests together, to ensure that tourism is actively supporting community empowerment and community-wealth building. In this way, local communities can develop visitor propositions, products and events that celebrate localness, with the community's interests at the heart.

We will embrace this locally-led, grass-roots approach to tourism, offering support and helping connect community-led projects with the wider visitor economy.

Crucially, this Responsible Tourism Strategy will integrate with the Place Plans which are currently under development across the region, to ensure we build a visitor economy which supports locally-owned community prosperity.

We will do this by:

- Having a locally-led approach to destination development, which supports the delivery of locally agreed Place Plans and recognises our communities as delivery partners
- Supporting the role of the third sector and social enterprises within the visitor economy and embedding them in product development and promotional activity
- Focusing on high-value tourism, rather than high volume
- Supporting community asset transfer initiatives which relate to a visitor proposition, to access routes to markets when ready
- Establishing an initiative to look into the creation and adoption of a circular economy, to pursue sustainability and increase wealth for communities
- Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to use locally sourced and seasonal products to support and create local jobs and enhance authenticity for the visitor
- Embedding the principles of community benefit in new tourism investments
- Working with communities and the third sector to develop visitor experiences around unique elements of regional culture and heritage, including Roman and Iron Age, early Christianity, textile heritage and literary and language including Gaelic and Scots.

## Accessible and Inclusive Tourism:

We want the South of Scotland to be an inclusive, welcoming, accessible and diverse destination. This has to be built into our thinking and planning from the outset: we must actively look to understand and mitigate barriers and restrictions which might exist. We are keen to attract visitors of all ages and backgrounds, including those with disabilities, the elderly, and families with young children.

We will look to support inclusive employment opportunities in the sector to help build a diverse workforce, in keeping with the Fair Work Framework.

We will work within VisitScotland's five key focus areas of inclusive tourism development:

- customer service
- information provision
- inclusive design
- inclusive events
- social tourism

We will do this by:

- Undertaking an inclusivity and accessibility audit of the destination, to identify key priority areas and tangible actions which we will report against annually
- Ensuring that accessible and inclusive tourism is included in the support and training made available to our businesses on customer service, information provision and inclusive design
- Supporting our event organisers to ensure their events are accessible
- Encouraging our businesses and communities to support social tourism schemes in the region.



## Visitor management:

It is essential that we preserve the unspoiled nature of our region. We must encourage our visitors to leave no trace and to abide by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. If there are instances in which tourism is having an adverse negative impact in a local area, whether to the community, the built environment or our natural world, we will be ready to act with appropriate collective interventions to mitigate this.

We will do this by:

- Raising awareness of responsible practices among visitors
- Encouraging businesses and enterprises to communicate these practices directly to their customers
- Working with businesses and communities at a local level to understand the impact of tourism and be ready to work with the appropriate council if active mitigations are required
- Considering the impact of new developments on the preservation of the unique charm of the South of Scotland
- Using the 'Scotland Starts Here' app and other digital tools, to track visitor movements across the South of Scotland and steer visitors away from certain areas, where required.



## Motorhome visitor experience:

Scotland is a popular destination for those travelling in motorhomes. The South of Scotland will embrace the economic opportunities afforded by this growing sector while mitigating potential risks and community concerns.

We want our region to be welcoming to all visitors. We will look to specifically strengthen our motorhome offering by providing:

- More Aires (authorised motorhome overnight stop-over locations)
- Facilities for the disposal of black (toilet) and grey (washing up) waste
- Recycling and waste disposal facilities
- Clear and consistent daytime and overnight parking regulations.

Crucially, we will ensure that motorhomes meaningfully contribute to the visitor economy rather than just passing through, designing services which actively encourage local spend and which actively benefit local businesses and communities. We want to encourage motorhomes to stay in existing campsites where possible but we recognise that a number are after a more isolated and 'wild' experience.

We will do this by:

- Actively manage our motorhome offering to maximise spend in region
- Creating a region-wide motorhome experience through the development of a motorhome policy framework that covers expectations of motorhome users, waste management (black, grey and litter) and details on locations where users can/cannot park
- Creating a network of free/low-cost black/grey waste disposal on local authority properties and via the private sector
- Creating a network of overnight parking options provided by local authorities, communities and the private sector for which motorhome users should be expected to pay appropriate charges, and are encouraged to spend at existing local businesses.

SCAN TO PLAY 



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# Scotland Starts Here: A Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland

## 2024-27 Action Plan:

Following extensive consultations, the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), VisitScotland, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Borders Council and all relevant public bodies have together launched a ten-year Responsible Tourism Strategy which will increase the visitor economy by £1bn over the next decade, supporting a further 6,000+ jobs.

The strategy has been welcomed and endorsed by the Convention of the South of Scotland, with Scottish Government ministerial and multi public agency commitment to key actions.

The vision, ambition, four strands (Inspire, Develop, Support and Responsible) and 22 areas of work in this Strategy are fixed for the next decade: this is our collective mission.

Behind this, we want to share the initial actions within these 22 areas of work, which will naturally evolve, as the landscape changes and new opportunities and challenges emerge.

Together, we are committed to transparent and accountable delivery. We invite you to judge us not by the words on the page, but the actions undertaken, and the results achieved.

To this end, we share here an initial three-year (2024-27) Action Plan which sits behind the Strategy. For each of the 109 actions identified, we state: which organisation has lead responsibility for delivery and which others are supporting; how these actions will be delivered; what indicative timescales will be followed; and what, together, we aim to have achieved by 2027. This is a dynamic document, with actions evolving based on learning, feedback and the changing businesses landscape.

Both the Strategy and Action Plan have unprecedented ambition for the South of Scotland's visitor economy. We may not achieve 100% of what we set out to in all areas, but it is right that we are aiming

high, working collaboratively and taking the necessary practical actions to deliver on this ambition in every possible respect.

Budgets will be aligned to this Action Plan wherever appropriate and multi-agency workgroups of key personnel will meet week-in week-out to push forwards delivery.

Four times a year we will publish an interim updated version of the Action Plan, with details about what has been achieved so far, what the next step is, and which individual has lead responsibility for delivery. After the first year of delivery, we will colour-code these quarterly updates (Red/Amber/Green), so it will be easy to assess progress at a glance.

Every year we will publish a full written update on what has been achieved that year, with public meetings and an open consultation through which businesses, communities and the public can give feedback, get involved and suggest edits to the specific actions. Following this annual consultation, updates will be published to the action plan, against which we will continue to report.

After three years, in March 2027, we will conclude this first Action Plan with an independent review of progress achieved against the ambition of the ten-year Strategy. This, along with further public input, will inform the next Action Plan covering 2027-2030, and then the third and final Action Plan covering 2030-34.

In this way, we will ensure the South of Scotland's Responsible Tourism Strategy never sits on a shelf gathering dust. Rather, the SSDA, VisitScotland, SOSE, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council and all relevant public bodies will work together with businesses, enterprises and communities, on a weekly basis to deliver on this ambition for the South of Scotland.

This is our commitment. Join us.

# 1. Inspire Visitors:

Ref.	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
<b>Developing the Destination Position and Profile</b>					
1.1.1	Developing our collective marketing approach with key target markets and segments to attract higher spending visitors who stay longer, with clear and consistent messaging to help build brand awareness and emotional connections	SSDA, VS	Clear annual marketing plan for the destination built around specific segments	Autumn 2024, then annually	Annual data published on marketing impact and reach achieved, with demonstrable associated increase in visitor numbers and spend
1.1.2	Ensuring more of our visitor experiences are digitally discoverable and bookable by identifying those who need support to get online	SSDA, VS	Digital discovery audit. Information, training, advice, support and mentoring	Autumn 2024, then ongoing	Almost all visitor experiences are online bookable
1.1.3	Encouraging and supporting our businesses, enterprises and communities to adopt the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding and feed into the design and delivery of marketing campaigns through the SSDA, so this becomes our collective voice	SSDA	Free SSH physical marketing collateral and digital assets available to businesses. Meetings to support local input to SSH content and campaigns.	Immediately underway and ongoing	SSH visible in every part of destination, with strong local ownership of content on SSH
1.1.4	Making the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding significantly more visible within the region.	SSDA, SBC, DGC, Transport Scotland, SOSE, VisitScotland,	A development plan created with key agencies to update and strengthen the signage landscape across the region. SSH branding on all major border crossing points from England. Physical and digital brand visibility across the destination.	First physical signs up in 2024. All major border entry points by end of 2025.	SSH visible in every part of destination, with strong local ownership of content on SSH

Developing the Destination Position and Profile					
1.1.5	Sustained long-term financial commitment to marketing the region	SOSE, SBC, DGC & VS	Five-year funding commitment from SOSE	2025-30 funding agreed by end of 2024	Clear, collective commitment to long-term planning and destination brand building
1.1.6	Creating effective digital means to track attitudes to holidaying in our region by our target markets	SSDA, VS	Annual destination awareness survey	Solution identified by autumn 2024 and reviewed annually	Able to track destination perception amongst key audiences, to understand marketing impact and design future campaigns
Develop the region as a year-round destination					
Page 67 1.2.1	Undertake a baseline seasonality audit and track the progress annually	SSDA	Baseline seasonality audit	Autumn 2024, then annually	Able to track seasonality to understand progress and design effective interventions
1.2.2	Facilitating local collaboration between businesses to support the development of a standard year-round offering, in which visitors can be signposted to attractions, restaurants and accommodation which are open, whenever they visit	SSDA, VS, SBC, DGC & SOSE	Clear communication of what is open when to visitors, so SSH only promotes businesses that are open at that time	Ongoing, with an annual incremental push	Visitors feel the destination is open for businesses, whenever they visit
1.2.3	Identifying potential clusters – these could be locations, themes, activities, events – and work with businesses and communities to develop a seasonal offer, where relevant maximising our natural capital	SSDA, VS, SBC & DGC	Hubs of collaboration established, where businesses work together to develop a specific off-season product that can be marketed (e.g. dark skies etc.)	Spring 2025 for winter promotion, then ongoing as required	Six tangible, off-season products which are demonstrably bringing in new visitors Oct - March

Develop the region as a year-round destination					
1.2.4	Market the region as a year-round destination, highlighting the key offerings in each season to relevant target segments within a 2-4 hour drive	SSDA & VS	Annual marketing campaign	Annually, with major focus on bookings Oct - March	Significantly increased numbers of visitors Oct - March
Inspire the travel trade to the potential of the region					
1.3.1	Developing and delivering a programme for businesses comprising travel trade training, 1:1 bespoke support and funding opportunities for businesses to allow them to promote to the trade. This programme should include how responsible products might be developed and taken to market	SSDA & VS, SBC & DGC	Audit of travel trade ready businesses. Programme of information, support, training and mentoring.	Audit and action plan published by winter 2024, then ongoing	Doubled the number of travel trade ready businesses in the destination
1.3.2	Enhancing the travel trade portal on SSDA to take to the travel trade market	SSDA	Up to date information on the digital portal	Updated webpages by winter 2024	Scotland Starts Heretravel trade hub a one-stop shop regularly used by the travel trade
1.3.3	Representation of the region by the SSDA at travel trade events, with dedicated capacity to manage key relationships with the travel trade, organise educational visits, help develop new products, etc	SSDA	Representation of destination at travel trade expos	Increased dedicated travel trade staff capacity from 2025	Effective working relationship with 40 key travel trade partners active in the South
1.3.4	Utilise the expertise of VisitScotland in supporting tourism businesses to develop bookable experiences to new and existing markets through activity including VisitScotland Connect	VS, SSDA	Clear VisitScotland programme of work	Ongoing	40+ new bookable products developed
1.3.5	Tracking % of international visitors and number of businesses that are part of the SSDA travel trade offering	VS & SSDA	Publication of annual data, with clear targets	From 2025, then annually	Doubled percentage of international visitors 2024-2027

Leverage our credentials and designations					
1.4.1	Actively engaging with the media to showcase the best of the South of Scotland to garner further 'best in class' accolades	<b>SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Media coverage, with monthly public reporting of coverage achieved. Active coordination and support to secure accolades	Ongoing, PR plan to be developed annually and reviewed regularly, with monthly reporting of coverage and reach	Three significant new accolades achieved for the destination
1.4.2	Actively using our accolades and designations in our destination marketing activity – targeting segments as relevant	<b>SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Marketing and PR of accolades to convert into increased visits	Annual PR plan/ reporting from 2024	Target segments demonstrably and associate the destination with these accolades
1.4.3	Where appropriate, using our designations -such as the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and UCI bike region label - to pilot new ways of responsible business practice	<b>GSAB, VS, SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC/SSDA</b>	Information, training, support and mentoring programme	From 2024, then ongoing	100+ businesses have more responsible practices
1.4.4	Securing the new Scottish Dark Sky Observatory in the Galloway Forest Park, to better leverage the economic benefits of the Galloway Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier) and establish the South of Scotland as the leading dark sky destination in the country.	<b>SDSO, SSDA, SOSE, FLS, DGC, VS, GSAB</b>	Securing the land; building the asset; developing an integrated visitor proposition	To be built and opened by March 2026	Scotland's national dark sky observatory open; attracting significant numbers of new visitors, especially through the winter months to extend the season

Have game-changing ambition to inspire international visitors					
1.5.1	Capitalising on the story of lowland emigration by building an iconic, totemic, national flagship visitor attraction in the South of Scotland, designed to attract higher spending international visitors	<b>SSDA &amp; SOSE, VS, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	New best-in-class national visitor attraction	Pre-feasibility study and business case completed 2024. Funding secured 2024-26. Building from 2026	Building underway, for opening in 2028
1.5.2	Build a 'stepping stone' pathway of satellite attractions and related stories (the birth of Christianity in the UK at Whithorn, Burns at Dumfries, etc) to encourage international visitors to move west-east across the region, rather than travel up to the central belt and Highlands	<b>SSDA &amp; VS/ DGC &amp; SBC</b>	International strategy composed of ten key assets which are developed to make them hubs for international visitors	Strategy published by 2025, with annual reporting	Ten assets are international-ready, with clear collective marketing
Page 70 1.5.3	Embracing, and being ready for, other game-changing opportunities including the potential for a National Park and a significantly strengthened Burns tourism product through the Burns Tourism Partnership	<b>SSDA &amp; Burns businesses, DGC, VS, SOSE</b>	Burns Tourism Action Plan. If a National Park is secured, dedicated marketing work	Phase 1 of Burns Tourism Action Plan complete 2024, with phases 2 and 3 agreed.	Value of Burns tourism is trebled
1.5.4	Position ourselves to maximise the chance of attracting significant and game-changing investment	<b>SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Inward investment 'toolkit' for tourism. Unblocking prospective investments and creating investment friendly practices: connecting investment aspiration with planning/licensing reality	Toolkit launched and investment unblocking systems underway by 2025	Significant new investment streams into the destination, with investors welcomed and supported through process

## 2.Developing the Visitor Experience:

Ref.	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective	
<b>Quality</b>						
2.1.1	Curating existing, and developing new, training and mentoring programmes that focus on raising the quality of the visitor experience at a regional and national level	<b>SSDA &amp; VS, DGC, SBC &amp; SOSE</b>	Quality improvement plan for destination, based on visitor feedback and target markets. Training, information, mentoring and support for businesses.	Destination Quality Improvement Plan published and underway by 2025, with annual reporting	Demonstrable increase in quality in target areas, based on visitor feedback, allowing price point increase	
Page 71	2.1.2	Continuing to develop and promote the South of Scotland Thistle Awards, to inspire and celebrate quality and excellence	<b>SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Annual South of Scotland Thistle Awards, with associated business training and support.	Ongoing/annual process	30+ key businesses have invested in quality improvements as a result of Thistles engagement
	2.1.3	Developing peer-sharing systems and case studies to share learning between businesses	<b>SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Sector case studies which show strategic investments in quality have transformed businesses, with transferable learning	From 2025, then ongoing	30+ key businesses have been inspired/ supported to invest in quality, and have benefited from this
	2.1.4	Promoting the South of Scotland as a quality destination to our target markets	<b>SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Dedicated marketing campaigns with clear messaging on quality	Annual Marketing Plan with annual impact reviews	Annual segment research showing target markets increasingly associated the South of Scotland with quality

Quality					
2.1.5	Actively supporting businesses to improve the quality of their food and drink offering, with systems established to make it easier to use local ingredients and products.	<b>SOSE, SF&amp;D, SSDA, VS</b>	Practical support, training and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate use of local products and ingredients. Utilise the strength of national programmes including development of Regional Food Tourism Ambassador Programme.	Systems established by 2026	Demonstrable increase in quality of the food and drink offering across the region, with most visitor economy businesses in the SoS proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers
Growth and Development					
2.2.1	Systematically identifying key growth hubs and developing stakeholder working groups for each, with agreed outcomes and clear timescales to develop the offering, inspire new bookable products and bring in new audiences	<b>SSDA, SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Businesses brought together to develop clear action plans as to how specific areas (e.g. equestrian, literary) can be developed to bring in new visitors	Working groups established by winter 2024 - with individual timeframes set and reviewed regularly	Five major new/ significantly developed tourism offerings
2.2.2	Developing a tourism 'incubator' programme to provide a space for collaborative ideas to be developed into new quality visitor experiences	<b>SOSE, SSDA &amp; VS</b>	Dedicated support for the development of major new propositions	From spring 2025	Three new visitor experiences launched and three further in development

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Visitor Information					
2.3.1	Review of current visitor information usage and effectiveness, with clear development plan agreed	SSDA & VS, SOSE	Visitor Information Review based on visitor feedback	Review and action plan published 2025	Doubled number of visitors using visitor information systems with increased positive feedback
2.3.2	Encouraging and facilitating collaboration between businesses and making the product more connected, to make it easier for visitors to find and book joined-up experiences and to linger longer	SSDA & VS	New/improved systems which direct visitors from one business to the next (e.g. accommodation to local attraction), including prior to arrival	Systems established and underway by 2025	Significantly increased activity booking prior to visitors' arrival, with visitor feedback that the SoS is an easy destination to visit and enjoy
2.3.3	Ensuring every visitor economy business is listed on 'Scotland Starts Here' and is supported to keep their listing up to date	SSDA	SSH business engagement and outreach	Ongoing	Doubled number of businesses on SSH, with 10x increase in listing updates
2.3.4	Integrate 'Scotland Starts Here' with other sources of visitor information across the region	SSDA	Clear integration of all visitor information systems	Review and action plan published 2025	All sources of visitor information feel connected and integrated to the visitor - one system not many
2.3.5	Ensuring 'Scotland Starts Here' branding, with QR codes directing to the website and app, is visible across the region	SSDA	Physical signage and collateral, and digital visibility across region	Ongoing	Trebled use of SSH visitor information in region

Events					
2.4.1	Developing the festivals and events content on 'Scotland Starts Here' and using events to engage with our visitors	<b>SSDA</b>	New events listings systems. Dedicated marketing around signature events	Summer 2024, then ongoing	South of Scotland seen as home of festivals and events, with more events selling-out and new major events in development
2.4.2	Linking the two Local Authority Events Strategies and the new National Events Strategy directly with the relevant actions in this strategy	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA, VS</b>	Combined/collective approach to connecting events and visitor economy	Ongoing	A joined-up approach to events and the visitor economy
2.4.3	Building on learning from the recent hosting of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in the region, with a view to hosting similar events of scale	<b>VS/DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Key relationships with national and international organisations and collective 'Team South' approach to moving quickly when opportunities arise	Proactive approach as relevant - ongoing	At least one very significant new major event brought into the South of Scotland
2.4.4	Supporting those attending events to stay longer and spend more in the region	<b>SSDA &amp; event organisers, DGC &amp; SBC, VS, SOSE</b>	Standardised visitor information systems for those attending events	Systems agreed and underway by 2025, with annual impact reviews	All major events giving SSH information from the point of booking, with 100% increase in wider regional spend
2.4.5	Encouraging the creation of further out of season events, as part of our ambitions to develop a year-round destination	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA, VS &amp; event organisers</b>	Funding and supporting used to encourage more out of season events	From 2024, ongoing	Clear calendar of year-round events and festivals, with double the number of associated visitors Oct-March

Events					
2.4.6	Connecting existing, or encouraging new, events to create themed festivals, linked to the established strengths of the region	<b>DGC &amp; SBC/ VS &amp; event organisers</b>	Development of 'Festivals' which bring together events, to build a critical mass and encourage people to stay for more than one	Initial scoping to be done by winter 2024. Launch in 2025	At least two such 'festivals', with dedicated collaborative marketing and a demonstrable increase in bookings and length of stay
Accommodation					
2.5.1	Better understanding what visitors want and encouraging investment in new bed-stock to meet these needs and opportunities	<b>VS, SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Visitor Bedstock Review, with clear actions and priorities based on visitor feedback and market analysis	Visitor Bedstock Review completed in 2025 with annual progress reviews	Significant progress made in each of the priority bedstock areas identified by visitors
2.5.2	Improving the quality and resilience of accommodation data for the South of Scotland through encouraging and incentivising local businesses and enterprises to participate in accommodation occupancy surveys	<b>DGC, SBC, SSDA, VS STA and other data partners</b>	Significantly increased data sharing and data use in decision making	Plan developed by autumn 2024, implementation ongoing	Double the number of businesses actively sharing data and trebling the number <i>using</i> data to inform decision-making
2.5.3	Developing a framework on how best to facilitate temporary campsites for events, considering the impact on/benefit to communities	<b>DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Clear framework/ systems for event organisers to use to temporarily increase bedstock	2025	At least three large annual events offering high-quality camping to significantly increase the number of visitors
2.5.4	Increasing the amount of travel trade ready accommodation	<b>SSDA, VS</b>	Audit of travel trade ready accommodation. Programme of information, support, training and mentoring.	Ongoing	Doubled the number of travel trade ready businesses

Accommodation					
2.5.5	Attracting external investment to create increased capacity and quality	SOSE/DGC & SBC	Inward investment 'toolkit' for tourism. Unblocking prospective investments and creating investment friendly practices: connecting investment aspiration with planning/licensing reality	Toolkit launched and investment unblocking systems underway by 2025	Significant new investment streams into the destination, with investors welcomed and supported through process
Infrastructure					
2.6.1	Developing a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for the region identifying key areas for improvement	DGC & SBC/ SOSE	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan, informed by visitor feedback, identifying priorities for infrastructure improvement (e.g. specific road, public transport, EV charging etc)	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan completed in 2025, with commitments from all partners and annual public reporting	Significant improvements (as evinced through visitor feedback) in each of the priorities identified in the plan
2.6.2	Applying for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to take forward key priorities	DGC & SBC, VS	Application to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	First application by 2025 then ongoing	Significant new funding secured from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

Infrastructure					
2.6.3	Fully integrating this Responsible Tourism Strategy into the Regional Economic Strategy and ensuring the visitor economy's infrastructure needs are recognised within the Regional Economic Partnership, considered by the Convention of the South of Scotland in its work, and with partner and national public agencies	<b>SSDA/SOSE &amp; stakeholders</b>	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan firmly embedded within the REP, RES and COSS	From 2025, then ongoing	Tourism and the visitor economy at the heart of all high-level, long-term decision making and budget setting
2.6.4	Establishing effective logistics and distribution systems to support businesses to use local ingredients	<b>SOSE, DGC, SBC &amp; SSDA</b>	Practical support and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate this.	Systems established by 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers
2.6.5	Developing more safe spaces to ride and open access to additional path networks across the South of Scotland to provide visitors of all cycling abilities safe, enjoyable and memorable experiences.	<b>Transport Scotland, DGC, SBC</b>	A multi-year funding commitment for our Regional Transport Partnerships and Local authorities to allow them to invest in long term projects that deliver strategic path networks and drive long term change for our citizens and visitors.	Underway by 2025	Increase in safe cycle routes
2.6.6	Establishing an EV charging network integral within the visitor economy, with charging stations at most accommodation and visitor attractions	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SOSE, SSDA</b>	Clear strategic approach, with information, support and funding to assist businesses to install EV charging for visitors, with a clear integrated system which is user friendly (i.e. not competing networks)	Initial plan to be developed by Spring 2025, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Most accommodation and visitor attractions to offer EV charging at appropriate speeds

<b>Infrastructure</b>					
2.6.7	Identifying locations where the provision of toilet facilities and bins can be improved and work with partners and communities to find locally-appropriate solutions	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Support, sharing, representation and funding to ensure toilets remain open.	Working groups established from summer 2024, with action plans agreed by spring 2025	15 existing or new public toilets have a secure and sustainable future
<b>Inward Investment</b>					
2.7.1	Identifying key strategic opportunities for investment and working together to offer the right package of business support to secure appropriate investment	<b>SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Business support	Ongoing as relevant	Increased inward investment directly attributable to business support
2.7.2	Establish sustained, open communication channels which allow us to listen to businesses and prospective investors, so we understand and can address potential blockers and impediments to investments	<b>SOSE/DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Better public-private sector working to find solutions to systemic investment blockers	Channels established autumn 2024, annual reporting from 2025 on tangible actions taken	SoS seen as an investment-friendly region, resulting in increased investments

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Inward Investment					
2.7.3	Establish integrated efficient systems with the two local authorities to ensure that significant prospective investments are well supported through planning and licensing, in an effective and timely way	<b>SSDA, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
2.7.4	Maximising current tourism investment pipeline opportunities including those linked to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Edinburgh and South-east Scotland City Regional – Regional Prosperity Framework and Levelling Up funding to develop the visitor experience. This includes a partnership approach to the following projects - Destination Tweed/Tweed Trail, FLS 7 Stanes Masterplans and Stranraer Harbour marine tourism plans.	<b>SOSE, DGC, SBC, VS &amp; SSDA , Destination Tweed/FLS</b>	Securing further investment and ensuring current investments deliver for the visitor economy	Ongoing as relevant	Significant further investment attracted

### 3. Support Businesses:

Ref	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
<b>Support and collaboration</b>					
3.1.1	Having a strong, effective and well-supported destination management and marketing organisation which functions as an inclusive network representing and supporting all of the visitor economy	SSDA/SOSE, DGC & SBC	South of Scotland Destination Alliance as a business-led network is supported through to 2030	Ongoing, but funding needs to be secured longer term	Continuity in activity, promotion, support to industry
3.1.2	Building mutual understanding between the private and public sector, with informed decision-making, unblocking investment pipelines by having direct channels to resolve issues in planning and licensing, and easing bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring that regulation is proportionate and effective	SSDA, DGC & SBC	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
3.1.3	Facilitating collaboration, sharing and peer learning between organisations, such that each individual business isn't having to reinvent solutions to the same challenges, and success breeds success	SSDA, SOSE & VS	Local meetings across the South of Scotland to support sharing and collaboration	Ongoing, with most meetings Oct - Feb	Every business in the SoS visitor economy a part of at least one local collaboration
3.1.4	Developing a clear and coordinated programme of needs-led business support from all organisations (SSDA, VS, SDS, Business Gateway, SOSE, LAs, Scotland Food & Drink, etc), so businesses know exactly what support is available where and are able to easily tap into it	SOSE, SSDA, DGC & SBC	Clear, coordinated and collaborative B2B front-end, where businesses can easily see what support they can access	Programme co-ordinated by Spring 2025, then reviewed annually/as support evolves	Every business in the SoS visitor economy knows what support is available and how to access it
3.1.5	Developing a locally-led approach to destination development by regularly bringing together businesses and communities to understand, and respond to, local priorities and to allow towns to showcase their unique identities	SSDA	Local coordination and support meetings every six months in all 14 areas of the SoS	Underway, and ongoing	All 14 areas of the SoS have local development plans for tourism in their local area



<b>Representation</b>					
3.2.1	Having bi-annual Locally Led Destination Development meetings in every part of the region, specifically to listen to, represent and act on the experience of local businesses and communities	<b>SSDA</b>	Businesses supported to share their priorities	Continuing every six months, with meetings in all 14 areas in Oct and Feb	Business concerns are clearly articulated and swiftly acted on
3.2.2	Developing specific new mechanisms for businesses to share information about how/where prospective new investments are being delayed or deterred by planning or licensing, with a quarterly review of this data by the SSDA and Council Leaders to develop practical solutions	<b>SSDA, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
3.2.3	Having bi-annual meetings between the SSDA and the senior leadership of the two councils, SOSE and VisitScotland, to share views heard from businesses and communities	<b>DGC, SBC, SSDA, SOSE &amp; VS</b>	Meetings taking place after the 14 LLDD local meetings, to share and discuss views of business	Dec and March each year, starting in 2024	Senior leadership of the Council is well-briefed on issues facing the industry
3.2.4	Bi-annually reporting back on the views and priorities communicated by business and communities, and what action has been taken	<b>SSDA</b>	Publication of key concerns raised by businesses across the SoS and actions taken to mitigate	Continuing, every six months, in Dec and March	Business concerns are clearly articulated and swiftly acted on
3.2.5	Having the SSDA and VisitScotland actively represented on the Regional Economic Partnership	<b>SSDA, VS &amp; REP</b>	Tourism at the centre of the Regional Economic Strategy	5 meetings a year	Visitor Economy at the heart of South of Scotland decision-making

Workforce development					
3.3.1	Developing a workforce skills plan for the South of Scotland's visitor economy	SOSE, SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, Colleges, SDS, Glasgow University	Identify key gaps and priorities, and specific actions which can address these	Winter 2025, then reviewed annually	Stronger workforce, better visitor experience
3.3.2	Advocating for careers in tourism and hospitality, building respect and recognition	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW	Positive representation of the visitor economy to prospective future workforce	Ongoing	Young people inspired and supported to enter tourism
3.3.3	Working closely with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders to have a clear and compelling package of services to support workforce development	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW, Colleges, SDS	New/improved services developed and clearly communicated through schools, colleges etc	Winter 2025 for initial package, then reviewed annually	Significant increase in young people accessing relevant training in key areas of skill gaps
Page 82 3.3.4	Looking for practical solutions to the specific shortage of trained chefs in the region	SOSE, Colleges, SSDA, DYW, SDS	Most ideally, a chef school within the region	Plan agreed in 2024, developed in 2025.	Increase in the number of qualified chefs working in the region as a result of new/improved training
3.3.5	Supporting the development of relevant qualifications and pathways, to encourage our young people to choose it as a career as they leave school	SOSE, Colleges, DYW, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Outreach programme to young people in the region, linked to relevant training	Spring 2025, then ongoing and reviewed annually	More young people proud to be entering into a career in hospitality and tourism
3.3.6	Working directly with the two colleges in the South of Scotland to provide appropriate practical training, which is linked to industry and embedded in the South of Scotland, such that young people can train, work and stay in the region	SOSE, Colleges, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Specific new/improved practical training courses in areas of current skill gaps	Development in 2024-25. Live by 2026	Enhanced employment opportunities, improved community wellbeing
3.3.7	Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to adopt a Fair Work approach to their staffing policies to ensure that the South of Scotland is a Fair Work destination	SOSE, SSDA	Practical training, information, advice, support and representation	Initial plan developed by Autumn 2024, then ongoing	More Fair Work businesses

<b>Workforce development</b>					
3.3.8	Establishing the South of Scotland as a year-round destination, with year-round employment	SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, SOSE	Supporting businesses to stay open more of the year/week, including through marketing and local collaboration	Ongoing	More businesses open week-round and year-round, offering quality, reliable employment
<b>Data Insights Sharing</b>					
3.4.1	Consulting business to understand their data needs and what insights would inform successful decision-making	SSDA, VS, SOSE	Consultation	Autumn 2024, ongoing	Clear understanding of what data is actually needed by businesses
3.4.2	Developing a regional tourism barometer that collects key data on visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction and destination awareness – to be publicly shared quarterly	SSDA, VS, DGC & SBC	Collection, collation and dissemination of data insights	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Clear, publicly available, easy to use, information identifying key trends businesses can make decisions against
3.4.3	Creating a central data hub for businesses to access the latest data from relevant public sector/industry sources with easy to digest ‘headlines’	SSDA, VS, SOSE, DGC & SBC	Digital data insights hub	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Clear, publicly available, easy to use, information identifying key trends businesses can make decisions against
3.4.4	Actively supporting businesses to interpret, understand and use key data insights	SSDA & VS	Training, webinars, newsletters etc	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Businesses able to quickly and easily make good decisions informed by relevant data

## 4. Be Responsible:

Ref	Actions	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
<b>Nature/Natural Capital</b>					
4.1.1	Working collaboratively with regional partners to deliver the Natural Capital aspirations of the Regional Economic Partnership and the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme	<b>SOSE,</b> NatureScot, SSDA, DGC, SBC	Clear delivery programme for Natural Capital	Developed 2024/25, delivered from 2025	Measurable improvements in the South of Scotland's natural capital as a result of this work, with this woven into the positive story we tell visitors about the south as a responsible destination
4.1.2	Measuring customer perception of access and seeking feedback on improvements to target future spend appropriately	<b>DGC &amp; SBC,</b> SSDA	Survey / social media data scrape to understand visitor perceptions and priorities	Measurements in place for Summer 2025, then re-visited every 3 years	Better understanding of visitor perceptions and experiences
4.1.3	Working collectively to develop and support our paths network, recognising the 'hero' routes and locations and agreeing priority areas for improvement	<b>DGC &amp; SBC,</b> SSDA	Integrated paths management across the SoS, with commitments to investment priorities and user feedback	Initial plan developed by winter 2024/25, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Demonstrably improved path network and visitor experience in priority areas

Nature/Natural Capital					
4.1.4	Investing in sustainable marine and coastal tourism	SOSE, SSDA, DGC & SBC	Clear framework establishing which articulates the commercial potential in marine and coastal tourism and agrees investment priorities	Consultations through 2024/25, framework live by 2025 and reported on annually	Increased investment in marine and coastal tourism, in strategic and targeted ways, which demonstrably increase visitor spend
4.1.5	Securing permanent funding to resource officers to work with funding bodies and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	DGC & SBC	Funding secured	Autumn 2025 - tied into RTIF application timings	Adequate human capacity
4.1.6	Working with communities and partner agencies to actively monitor the environmental impact of visitors in key areas and adjust practises as required	DGC & SBC, SSDA & SOSE	Communities able to raise concerns about the impact of tourism, with annual reporting linked to rapid decision-making to mitigate	Monitoring framework to be developed by winter 2024/25, and then reported against annually	As we grow tourism, we are confident we have effective safeguards to ensure this is not at the cost of the environment
Net Zero					
4.2.1	Signing up to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.	SSDA	A formal signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, with appropriate associated actions	Spring 2025	South of Scotland a part of globally-recognised good practice on climate action
4.2.2	Creating EV charging points at accommodation and visitor attractions to allow visitors to charge their vehicles.	DGC & SBC, SOSE, SSDA	Clear strategic approach, with information, support and funding to assist businesses to install EV charging for visitors, with a clear integrated system which is user friendly (i.e. not competing networks)	Initial plan to be developed by Spring 2025, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Most accommodation and visitor attractions to offer EV charging at appropriate speeds

Net Zero					
4.2.3	Influencing Scottish Power to provide the necessary power supply required at accommodation and attractions for EV charging.	<b>SOSE, DGC, SBC &amp;SSDA</b>	Listening to difficulties businesses have faced, clearly articulating these to Scottish Power with specific asks which are publicly reported on	Immediately, then ongoing	Most accommodation and visitor attractions have sufficient power access for EV charging at appropriate speeds
4.2.4	Encouraging and supporting EV hire at public transport hubs	<b>DGC &amp; SBC/ relevant transport operators</b>	EV hire businesses able to invest and establish a clear offering	Ongoing	Visitors able to hire an EV from each of the major transport hubs in the South of Scotland
4.2.5	Providing a framework to support and encourage tourism businesses on a journey to Net Zero by utilising the expertise of SSDA, SOSE, VisitScotland, FLS, NatureScot, the local authorities, and the Galloway and South Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere	<b>SOSE, VS, SSDA, GSAB, DGC, SBC</b>	Training, webinars, information, practical support, mentoring, case studies, etc to help businesses on their net zero journey	Winter 2024, then ongoing and reviewed regularly	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS taking tangible actions against clear net zero plans
4.2.6	Building a destination brand which has Net Zero proudly at its heart	<b>SSDA, VS, SOSE</b>	Clear marketing of the SoS as a Net Zero destination	Part of initial brand review - summer 2024, then reviewed as required	A more responsible destination

Community-led Tourism					
4.3.1	Having a locally-led approach to destination development, which supports the delivery of locally agreed Place Plans and recognises our communities as delivery partners	<b>SSDA, DGC &amp; SBC</b>	Bi-annual local meetings across all of the SoS, in which local businesses/ groups can feed into planning	Underway. Local meetings every six months	Strong local ownership and engagement in all matters which affect tourism locally
4.3.2	Supporting the role of the third sector and social enterprises within the visitor economy and embedding them in product development and promotional activity	<b>SSDA, TSI, SCOTO, GSAB</b>	Third sector able to take an active part in Locally Led Destination Development work	Initial plan developed by summer 2024, then ongoing	Stronger links and joint working between the public, private and third sector
4.3.3	Focusing on high-value tourism, rather than high volume	<b>SSDA, VS</b>	Having a clear cost-benefit-analysis approach to segmentation: targeting visitors who contribute the most and have the least negative impact	Underway, ongoing	Improved community wellbeing, and greater economic benefit
4.3.4	Supporting community asset transfer initiatives which relate to a visitor proposition, to access routes to markets when ready	<b>SOSE, SSDA, DGC, SBC, VS, SCOTO</b>	Community groups able to own and run key local assets	Underway, ongoing	Increased community ownership of key local assets
4.3.5	Establishing an initiative to look into the creation and adoption of a circular economy, to pursue sustainability and increase wealth for communities	<b>SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC, SCOTO</b>	Tangible actions agreed and underway, to advance the circular economy	Develop the initiative by Spring 2025, then review annually	Demonstrable improvements in community wealth and sustainability
4.3.6	Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to use locally sourced and seasonal products to support and create local jobs and enhance authenticity for the visitor	<b>SOSE, DGC, SBC &amp; SSDA</b>	Practical support and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate this.	Systems established by 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers

Community-led Tourism					
4.3.7	Embedding the principles of community benefit in new tourism investments	<b>SOSE, DGC &amp; SBC, SCOTO</b>	Public investments in the third sector should include clear community benefit	Ongoing	Demonstrably increased community benefit
4.3.8	Working with communities and the third sector to develop visitor experiences around unique elements of regional culture and heritage, including Roman and Iron Age, early Christianity, textile heritage and literary and language including Gaelic and Scots.  This will include the agreed partnership approach across the region to the development of Iron Age and Roman Heritage and the potential for participatory archaeological digs.	<b>SOSE, SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC &amp; HES</b>	Clear messaging in destination marketing, linked to product development	Ongoing, but plans for key themes to be developed by Spring 2025	Increased visitors coming to the South of Scotland for this cultural heritage
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism					
4.4.1	Undertaking an inclusivity and accessibility audit of the destination, to identify key priority areas and tangible actions which we will report against annually	<b>SSDA, DGC, SBC &amp; key stakeholders as relevant</b>	Clear plan for how we will improve access and inclusion	Undertake the audit by Spring 2025, then review annually	Demonstrably improved access and inclusion, from visitor feedback
4.4.2	Ensuring that accessible and inclusive tourism is included in the support and training made available to our businesses on customer service, information provision and inclusive design	<b>SSDA, VS &amp; key stakeholders as relevant</b>	Training, support, advice and information	Spring 2025, then ongoing as required	Significant increase in the number of businesses taking tangible actions to increase access and inclusion
4.4.3	Supporting our event organisers to ensure their events are accessible	<b>DGC, SBC</b>	Training, support, advice, information and oversight	Spring 2025, then ongoing as required	All major events in the South of Scotland are inclusive and accessible



Visitor management					
4.5.1	Raising awareness of responsible practices among visitors	<b>SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC</b>	Physical signage and digital information available across the SoS	Priorities established by end of 2024, with annual reporting against these	Most visitors have seen, and been influenced by, information about responsible practices
4.5.2	Encouraging businesses and enterprises to communicate these practices directly to their customers	<b>SSDA, VS</b>	Clear, easy to use and freely available visitor information campaign assets are available for businesses to use	Priorities established by end of 2024, with assets available by spring 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are helping disseminate information about responsible visitor practices
Page 89 4.5.3	Working with businesses and communities at a local level to understand the impact of tourism and be ready to work with the appropriate council if active mitigations are required	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA &amp; SOSE</b>	Communities able to raise concerns about the impact of tourism, with annual reporting linked to rapid decision-making to mitigate	Monitoring framework to be developed by winter 2024/25, and then reported against annually	As we grow tourism, we are confident we have effective safeguards to ensure this is not at the cost of the environment
4.5.4	Using the 'Scotland Starts Here' app and other digital tools, to track visitor movements across the South of Scotland and steer visitors away from certain areas, where required	<b>SSDA</b>	Regular tracking of visitor movements using the SSH app and other tools	Winter 2024, then ongoing as required	Improved community wellbeing, sustainable tourism and enhanced visitor experiences

Motorhome visitor experience					
4.6.1	Creating a region-wide motorhome experience through the development of a motorhome policy framework that covers expectations of campervan users, waste management (black, grey and litter) and details on locations where users can/cannot park	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Clear policy framework for all the South of Scotland	Winter 2024 and reviewed annually	Standardised visitor experience, with associated spend in region and decreased negative impacts
4.6.2	Creating a network of free/low-cost black/grey waste disposal on local authority properties and via the private sector	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Black/grey waste disposal systems in place, with monitoring	Live by 2025	Improved campervan facilities and community wellbeing
4.6.3	Creating a network of overnight parking options provided by the local authorities and the private sector for which motorhome users should be expected to pay appropriate charges, and are encouraged to spend at existing local businesses	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Parking established, carefully managed and clearly advertised	Spring 2025 and ongoing as required	Improved campervan facilities and community wellbeing
4.6.4	Actively manage our motorhome offering to maximise spend in region	<b>DGC &amp; SBC, SSDA</b>	Regular feedback from businesses to understand, and maximise, local spend	Ongoing and review annually	Demonstrable feedback from local businesses and communities that motorhomes are actively contributing