

Public Document Pack



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FRIDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2020

A MEETING of the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE will be held on FRIDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 10.00 am. The Chairman has directed that this meeting will be conducted in accordance with Section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and will be accessed remotely by all Members via MS TEAMS. The meeting will be live streamed to the public and a link will be on the Council website.

J. J. WILKINSON,
Clerk to the Council,

28 August 2020

BUSINESS		
1.	Apologies for absence	
2.	Order of Business	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Minute (Pages 3 - 6) Consider Minute of Meeting held on 31 January 2020 (copy attached).	5 mins
5.	Biodiversity Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Report and its local implications. Presentation by Charles Dundas, Chair of Scottish Environment LINK and Chief Executive Officer of Borders Forest Trust https://bordersforesttrust.org/ Supporting Documents: 1. IPBES report https://ipbes.net/global-assessment 2. State of Nature Scotland https://www.nature.scot/state-nature-scotland-report-2019 3. ScotLink: Nature on Red Alert https://www.scotlink.org/publication/scotlands-nature-on-red-alert-climate-change-impacts-on-biodiversity/	45 mins
6.	Climate Change: A Just Transition (Pages 7 - 14)	45 mins

	<p>A Just Transition – Interim Report, further work of the Commission and a Borders’ perspective</p> <p>Presentation by Kate Rowell, Just Transition Commissioner:</p> <p>Supporting documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Just Transition Commission Interim Report, February 2020 https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-interim-report/ 2. SBC Response to the Just Transition Commission Interim Report (copy attached) 3. Just Transition Commission Advice for a Green Recovery, July 2020 http://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-advice-green-recovery/ 4. Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/ 5. Infrastructure Commission: Key Findings Exec Summary (Jan 2020) https://infrastructurecommission.scot/storage/278/Phase1_ExecutiveSummary.pdf 6. CERG – Climate Emergency Report (Aug 2019) https://www.changeworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/Climate-Emergency-Statement.pdf 7. CERG – 8 policy Packages for a Green Recover (July 2020) https://www.changeworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/CERG_Green%20Recovery_Final%20report_July2020_0.pdf 	
7.	Any Other Items Previously Circulated	
8.	Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent	
9.	<p>Date of next meeting Friday 4 December 2020 at 10.00 am</p>	

NOTES

1. **Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members’ discussions.**
2. **Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**

Membership of Committee:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), H. Anderson, G. Edgar, J. Greenwell, S. Haslam, H. Laing, D. Paterson, E. Robson and S. Scott

Please direct any enquiries to Fiona Walling 01835 826504
Email: fwalling@scotborders.gov.uk

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held in Committee Room 2/3, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells on Friday, 31 January 2020 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), H. Anderson, G. Edgar, J. Greenwell, S. Haslam, H. Laing, D. Paterson, E. Robson and S. Scott.

In Attendance:- Chief Planning & Housing Officer (I. Aikman), Senior Policy Advisor (D. Scott), Corporate Policy Advisor (M. Cook), Senior Communications & Marketing Officer (A. Drummond), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

1. **WELCOME**

Chairman, Councillor Aitchison, welcomed Members and officers to the first meeting of the Sustainable Development Committee and gave a special welcome to the members of the public in attendance. In his introduction, he gave a personal insight into the challenges faced with respect to climate change and loss of biodiversity, drawing attention to the way we live and use resources, the choices we make and the impact of actions we take. He noted that every political group was represented on the new Committee and looked forward to starting and leading the process towards embedding sustainable development in the Scottish Borders.

2. **BRIEFING: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

2.1 With reference to paragraph 5 of the Scottish Borders Council Minute of 29 August 2019, there had been circulated copies of a briefing note explaining the background to the Sustainable Development Committee (SDC). Councillor Aitchison explained that the purpose of the paper was to simply set out 'how we got here' and very broadly some of those priority areas the Council needed to work on. The paper referred to the commitment made by Council, on 29 August 2019, to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals as they related to local government, as follows:

1. An overarching ethos bringing clarity, consistency and coherence to the Council's approach across the full range of its activities.
2. Taking a leadership role in relation to sustainable development enabling the Council to maintain and build value organisationally through the efficient and sustainable use of resources, to develop public value in its relationship to citizens and communities, and to manage reputational risk.

Council agreed to establish the SDC to drive and monitor the implementation of the above goals. As part of this process, the Committee would review recent decisions and actions of the UK and Scottish Governments, UK local authorities and Borders wide voluntary sector initiatives, with a view to making recommendations as to how the Council could exercise leadership in tackling climate change. The Committee would report to Council annually on progress. Council had also agreed that, to support implementation of sustainable development, the previous Sustainable Procurement Policy Group would be renamed the 'Sustainable Development Group' (SDG) and its role extended to ensure that appropriate practice was adopted and followed in how the Council undertook the full range of its activities. Comprising both Executive Directors, the Director for Assets and

Infrastructure, and key officers from across Council services, the SDG had met twice to agree the details of its remit and membership, and to consider priority areas of Council activity and methodologies for assessment of sustainability and carbon appraisal. The SDG had recently co-ordinated Council responses to 3 recent Scottish Government consultations. For information, copies of the responses were included with the agenda papers. Chair of the SDG, Ian Aikman, explained that in representing the operational and Corporate side of the Council, the Group would support the Committee and take forward ideas and provide a practical perspective.

- 2.2 Councillor Aitchison highlighted two interrelated early pieces of work highlighted in the briefing, namely Performance Indicators and Priorities. A presentation later in the Committee agenda considered the urgency of climate action by governments, other public bodies (including the Council) and of society as a whole. Other priority areas identified by officers included – energy, transport and biodiversity. Clearly, there was considerable overlap between these. It was noted that the Council had been investing in energy saving projects for a number of years, and this programme would continue producing carbon savings and cost savings. A key step in ensuring that the Council delivered improved sustainable development performance was ensuring that we could measure progress. Some appropriate indicators already existed but it was clear that there were gaps. A vital task of the SDG would be to develop a suite of performance indicators, which could support improvement. Some potential measures, such as energy savings, and street cleanliness were already reported. Consideration would need to be given to which indicators should be reported where, as well as to the refinement of existing indicators and the development of new indicators. It was expected that updates on performance reporting activity would be available at the next meeting of the Committee. There followed a brief discussion about the introductory paper, with Members commenting on some effective measures already taken by the Council to save energy and reduce waste in particular. Members also made reference to very difficult decisions and perhaps unpalatable decisions that would need to be made in the future.

DECISION NOTED

3. DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 As the main part of the meeting, Councillor Aitchison welcomed Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability at the University of Edinburgh. Mr Gorman was in attendance to give a presentation entitled 'Responding to the Climate Crisis – Urgency, Embedding and Lessons Learned'. The outline of the presentation slides fell into 5 main sections as follows:

- Some background on the science and why this really is an emergency
- Impacts (or why we should be concerned...)
- (Briefly) the Sustainable Development Goals and broader context
- The University of Edinburgh and its approach
- Leadership and Change Making for Adaptive Problems

- 3.2 Following the comprehensive presentation, which was very well received by those present, Mr Gorman responded to questions and comments from Members of the Committee. When asked for his view about Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage, as supported by Scottish Government, Mr Gorman believed that all measures that were available would be needed to tackle carbon emissions. Edinburgh University was a leader in Carbon Capture and storage and was also working on a machine to extract carbon from the atmosphere. With regard to the need to develop carbon literacy, Mr Gorman advised that there was extensive guidance available to calculate carbon footprint. He referred to 3 types of emissions involved in the calculation, which were differentiated as follows: Scope 1 were direct emissions, e.g. burning of fuels on site; Scope 2 were indirect emissions, e.g. generated by electricity consumed; and Scope 3 were broader indirect emissions controlled by a different emitter, e.g. by use of air travel. He added that an organisation should choose the scopes on which to focus. It was also important for an

organisation to develop mechanisms to adapt to the effects of climate change. e.g. to extremes in weather. As to whether it was easier for an urban area than for a rural area to achieve zero carbon emissions, Mr Gorman accepted that the situation was different and probably more difficult for a rural area, having potentially more adaptation costs. However he also pointed out that in terms of population, rural communities often had more local identification and engagement with initiatives than an urban population. There were also more opportunities in a natural environment to offset carbon emissions in other ways, e.g. by planting trees. Discussion continued about the need for Scottish Borders Council to firstly carry out an audit of its current carbon footprint, noting the steps already taken to reduce emissions. Mr Aikman confirmed that this work to establish the current position had already been started by officers. The key was to confirm the current position, identify targets and to put in place an effective action plan which could be considered alongside the budget planning process. It was recognised that alongside this process the Council needed to develop expertise. Although the organisation had skills and knowledge covering a number of areas, Mr Aikman accepted that the SDG was in its early stages and a dedicated expert resource would be helpful. Members commented on the apparent level of awareness of climate change issues amongst young people and welcomed that. However they also referred to the need for schools to focus on helping pupils develop the new and different skills that would be needed in the workforce particularly as part of the construction industry's contribution towards sustainable development. A further point touched on in the discussion included the issue of responsible investment and implications of an organisation's financial investment decisions in terms of both long term returns and climate impact. In conclusion Councillor Aitchison thanked Mr Gorman for his hugely important and thought provoking presentation and expressed the hope that a relationship in this area could be maintained between Scottish Borders Council and the University of Edinburgh.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation as attached to this Minute.

4. CLIMATE ACTION - PLAYING #OURPART

- 4.1 The second presentation, from Mr Aikman, expanded some of the key messages of the previous presentation with the particular aim of preparing the Council for a step change in its approach to climate action. After referring to statements on the evidence of a climate emergency Mr Aikman highlighted that in Scotland 20 Councils had declared a climate emergency, including all Scottish Borders Council's partner councils in the City of Edinburgh and South-East Region, in Borderlands (including Carlisle City, Cumbria and Northumberland County Councils) and in the South of Scotland. Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 set a legally-binding 'net zero' target of all greenhouse gases by 2045 with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040. As well as legal duties, Councils had a vital role in responding to the climate emergency: in terms of their scale and large resource base; influence over key areas such as planning, transport and procurement; and in a leadership role. Scottish Borders Council had made progress in a number of areas such as LED street lighting roll out; Energy Efficiency Programme; fleet transition to low emission vehicles; and council mileage reduction and efficient pool car fleet. In terms of next steps, Mr Aikman highlighted that the SDG now needed to develop a clear target and coherent plan for climate action and put in place effective performance monitoring. The time was also appropriate for a report to Council to propose the way forward.
- 4.2 In the ensuing discussion the question was asked as to whether the Council had resources to put in place the harder actions, having already introduced easier fixes. Mr Cook emphasised that, although there would be difficult choices to make and possibly up-front costs to manage, in many cases there were long term savings associated with sustainability. However there was no illusion about the element of challenge involved. Mr Aikman added that a large proportion of Council spending was supported by funding from other partners and unless the authority could deliver on sustainability that funding was unlikely to continue. Discussion continued about the importance of communicating to the

public a positive vision to accompany choices made by the Council in terms of the climate change agenda, rather than decisions in spending simply being seen as cuts. On being invited, by the Chairman, to contribute to the discussion, a member of the public reinforced the strong positive vision that the future could be better, not worse. He welcomed the new committee and wished it well, emphasising the level of support there was in the community for climate change actions. The Leader responded that any assistance to spread the message within the community and through Community Councils in particular would be welcome.

- 4.3 Councillor Aitchison thanked Mr Aikman for his presentation and led a discussion on the way forward. It was noted that the SDG would continue to work on establishing the Council's current position in respect of carbon footprint, set out targets and put in place an action plan accompanied by performance monitoring measures. With reference to the presentations Councillor Aitchison emphasised that there was clear evidence of a climate emergency and that the Council must play its fullest part in responding to that emergency. There was unanimous agreement that officers prepare a report to Council on the climate emergency as soon as possible.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the presentation 'Climate Action – Playing #OurPart' as attached to this Minute.**
- (b) **AGREED to recommend to Council that Council considers a report on the climate emergency as soon as possible.**

5. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

In terms of the cycle of future meetings Members suggested that the Committee meet 4 times per year once its role was fully established. However it was agreed that at this early stage a more ad hoc arrangement of meetings would be more appropriate, a meeting in April, June and early Autumn being suggested. In response to a question about the Committee's input into the draft report to Council, Mr Cook hoped that the report would be prepared in time for the March meeting. This would leave insufficient time for an additional SDC meeting but as part of the usual formal committee report timetable, the report would be available to Members prior to the Council meeting.

AGREED the arrangements for future meetings outlined above.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

Just Transition Commission Interim Report - Questions – Scottish Borders Council

1. What do you see as the main economic opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

Opportunities. For Scottish Borders, just transition means an inclusive and sustainable economy/place:

- a) With among the lowest median wages in the UK, the Scottish Borders must garner benefit from its transition assets, facilitating investment in skills and training for high value jobs connected with the renewable energy, and carbon sequestration/storage industries, contributing to a Green recovery.
- b) Severely impacted by COVID-19, the region's core sectoral strengths include tourism, creative industries, food & drink, and manufacturing. As well as supporting, restoring and reimagining these businesses, there is a strong need to attract in new businesses with high skills demands and commensurate pay levels, such as life sciences, data science, tech, finance. If digital connectivity is addressed, this becomes possible.
- c) Circular economy opportunities need to be fully mapped to assess key product and service routes domestically and internationally. Again, associated skills and training requirements must be identified.
- d) Land use accounts for around one third of current carbon emissions in Scotland. We should build on the Land Use Strategy 2016 – 2021, particularly the Pilot work undertaken in Aberdeenshire and Scottish Borders. This will help us understand relationship between issues such as woodland creation, peatland restoration, natural flood management, improving biodiversity and habitat protection by planning land use at the strategic level, vital to delivering the necessary reduction in carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions at scale. The Scottish Borders has an important role to play in the national effort around woodland creation and peatland restoration as a mitigation of carbon emissions. But this must also bring added value to the region through, for example, increased green investment, tourism investment in response to biodiversity gain, and enterprise, growth and skills and training opportunities from commercial woodland.

Challenges. The rurality of our region is a huge challenge for:

- a) Transport generally and Public Transport in particular: increasing operating costs, and pressures on public sector budgets, more and more services have been reduced or cut altogether, engendering much greater reliance on private car use, increased expenditure for residents.
- b) Digital Connectivity, where provision of Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage has lagged behind more urban areas.
- c) Energy Distribution networks will need to be developed which have sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand for distributed generation; for example, in relation to new demands for electric vehicles and a growing number of heat pumps. For the Scottish Borders, the question of scale is augmented by challenges of connectivity and infrastructural resilience.
- d) Building of new homes has been stultified in the Scottish Borders by market failure. Recently only RSLs have delivered new housing. Market failure in regions like our's typically

restrains the setting of more ambitious planning and building control standards. The most effective way of addressing this is to set higher mandatory minimum requirements nationally. However, awareness is needed of the further constraining effects of this upon development.

- e) Engagement with businesses in rural communities is challenging, especially with SME's, as are issues over business development, diversification, innovation, upskilling (particularly in the construction sector).
2. What do you think are the wider social (health, community, etc.) opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

There are clear **opportunities** in:

- a) The significant skills, training and employment opportunities associated with the renewables (particularly wind and biofuels), carbon sequestration and storage industries and businesses built on other developing green technologies - geothermal, solar, hydro, hydrogen, electric vehicles and battery storage etc.
- b) Energy services – including installation/maintenance of systems.
- c) Energy efficiency market – through retrofit to meet EES EPC standards strengthening the local skills base and supply chains.
- d) Sustainable Transport – e.g. delivery of rural walking & cycling transport models (like those) in the Highlands would help support a Green Recovery in the region.
- e) The Social Dimension – not simply community based ESCOs, owned and managed by community share/CIC, or community ownership of assets, but co-operation through the likes of car clubs, community energy purchasing, and in how communities function particularly in a post-COVID-19 environment. The nature of both service provision and the economy has been altered already and this will likely continue with Community Support Hubs (drawing on significant volunteer effort), settlement based health and care staff becoming established. A broad array of companies and public sector organisations have moved from operating through means of previous processes and interfaces to embracing new ways of working supported by digital technology. We need to embed these sets of behaviours.
- f) In particular, Scottish Borders and the wider South of Scotland is ideally placed to capitalise on nature-based solutions. The area is the most wooded part of Scotland. It has rich farmland and moorland and clean river catchments. It is rich in “natural capital”, and is developing a work-stream on this basis within the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal (BIG). Located between the central belt and the North of England, there is a large potential ‘regional’ market for tourism.
- g) The Borderlands Energy Masterplan (a further work-stream of BIG) seeks to address some of these issues. The ambition is to exploit the existing energy asset base and also encourage and support further investment in the capacity to supply clean energy to the region. This proposition is driven by the twin drivers of encouraging commercial investment and job creation in the region and alleviating the impact of high energy prices on low income.

Challenges mirror or sit alongside opportunities, and are complicated by our low wage economy and larger and rapidly increasing percentage of older households.

- a) In Housing: much higher than Scottish average of pre-1945 stock, engenders adaptability, retrofit and quality assurance issues.
- b) Opportunities to strengthen local skills and supply chains in relation to energy efficiency or renewables sector are mirrored by current deficits in these areas.
- c) Fuel poverty is higher in our region than Scotland's exacerbated by factors like the volume of pre-1945 stock, and rurality - meaning more dwellings are off gas.
- d) In transport, in spite of welcome developments in relation to the Borders Railway and Reston Rail Station, public transport is thinly-spread and fragmented and there is no investment in sustainable transport links to all of the key towns in the regions.

3. What would a successful transition to net-zero emissions look like for your sector/community?

- a) The Scottish Borders is a significant net generator of renewable (wind) energy. Regrettably, hoped-for socio-economic benefits to the region have not materialised. This is deeply concerning, given that previous energy transitions have been catalysts for sustained periods of national and regional development: coal in the Central Belt; hydropower in the Highlands; and oil and gas in the North East. The permissive nature of community benefit developer contributions has failed to garner significant benefits. The Council believes that delivering benefits for consumers (domestic and business) should be an explicit aim of strategic policy as a counter to market failure and the challenges which emerge from the region's rural context. This should take the form of guaranteeing a resilient and well-integrated regional supply network, and in pricing benefits to consumers. Moreover, as noted, there is a need to convert the combination of national decarbonisation ambitions and our local transition assets into employment and enterprise creation within the Green Economy, supported by the development of a training infrastructure, which generates increased socio-economic benefits for our region and the country.
- b) Simply put, for the Scottish Borders, a 'just transition' must mean addressing rural inequality. Equity requires rural blueprints for value retention in local systems whether food and drink production, forestry products, or energy assets.
- c) There are very clear and well established dependencies between the component parts of 'wellbeing': health, housing, environment, quality and fair work, community engagement and resilience. By addressing the challenges and grasping the opportunities highlighted in our answer to question 1, we believe that significant advances can be made in wellbeing. Please see our answer to question 4 for some of the steps we consider required to deliver this.
- d) For the Scottish Borders, a just transition means a dispersal of economic and social benefit more broadly and specifically to regions which have experienced long-term structural challenges. This means strengthening connectivity within the Scottish Borders and between the Scottish Borders and other places. It also means matching spatial development with policy initiatives designed to spread the benefits of an inclusive economy more widely and equitably. Sustainable marine and coastal development is an important part of this context.
- e) We look forward to a region and nation in which the natural world is properly valued, our behaviours sustainable, and resilient communities comprise an active order generation and young people and of all generations able access skills and employment opportunities which are fair and rewarding. Trust and engagement between citizens, business, service providers, and governments are strong with flourishing participation in the local and national

economies, and social and democratic context. Wellbeing and fairness are highly and rightly valued.

4. What actions do you think the Scottish Government should take to manage the opportunities and challenges referenced above?
 - a) A more structured approach to national and regional development that recognises the complexity of economic and social challenges and opportunities and which, in promoting net zero, delivers added value to place through development gain, jobs, skills and training.
 - b) With respect to Housing, sector leading and adaptable (e.g. care and digitally future-proofed) standards and the right low carbon housing not simply that with the highest returns; the standards of existing stock being significantly improved through initiatives which extend and build on programmes like LHEES; and proper consideration of the wider environment, infrastructure and facilities that are required for communities to flourish.
 - c) UK/Scottish Governments continuing prioritise digital connectivity in the Scottish Borders and similar areas, and the expectations here should reflect a level of service and connectivity which is industry leading and internationally competitive. The global pre-COVID-19 work-from-home rate of 3% skyrocketed to near 90%, with analysts predicting it will return to around 30% after the lockdown. We need to bank and entrench as much of this as possible. Similarly, 4G and 5G mobile infrastructure coverage is a critical component of boosting opportunities in rural areas.
 - d) Transport and rethinking our relationships. If the benefits of a just transition are to be extended beyond existing urban centres to smaller towns and rural areas, a bi-partite approach is needed which seeks to develop and enhance hubs in regions like the Scottish Borders, and, at the same time, ensures effective and low carbon infrastructural connections, creating conduits for entrepreneurship, workers, skills, training, goods and services. Infrastructure is overwhelmingly conceived as something which extends 'out' from cities, in which networks exist predominantly to serve the interests of cities. If rural areas are to maximise their contribution to Scotland's National Ambition, a just transition must encompass a new approach to national transport infrastructure. The question becomes one of how you integrate the economy of the Scottish Borders and, more broadly, the South of Scotland more effectively into the national and economic infrastructure? This means thinking about the infrastructure requirements across rural areas with low population densities punctuated by small settlements, while adhering to the demands of net zero.
 - e) Natural capital must be accorded appropriate value whether through ecosystems services or similar. We must recognise the centrality of natural capital and its sustainability not only to climate action but to the twin existential threat of biodiversity loss. For the Borders and SoS, with the support of Scottish Government, there is an opportunity to lead in this area, through promoting biodiversity net gain, national ecological network and linkage to the national Land Use Strategy Adopting through an ecosystem approach. This could be achieved through the Borderlands Natural Capital initiative and linkage of the Regional Spatial Strategy to Regional Land Use Partnerships & Frameworks as they emerge.
 - f) Binding all of the above together, we need honest dialogue with stakeholders and a serious and committed engagement about trade-offs with citizens, all built around the overriding purpose of net zero and aiming to do so justly.

5. Are there specific groups or communities that may be, or feel that they may be, adversely affected by a transition to a net-zero carbon economy? What steps can be taken to address their concerns?
- a) The Scottish Borders comprises 4,732 square kilometres, and is home to 115,270 people, making it the 6th largest and 7th most sparsely populated council area in Scotland (at 24 people per square km). Only 5 settlements have a population in excess of 5,000 and none is larger than 20,000.
 - b) The rural nature of the Scottish Borders is one of our biggest assets with the quality of our natural environment and the quality of our landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area. It is also one of our key challenges.
 - c) The area suffers from a significant out-migration of young people and shrinking workforce – between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of 16 to 64 years olds fell by 4%, and the proportion of the population defined as “working age” decreased from 63% in 2007 to 59% in 2018. By contrast, the number of older people continues to grow with the number of over 65s having grown by 25% over the same period; worsening the region’s dependency ratio which at 69.21 is significantly higher than the Scottish level of 55.71 (2018).
 - d) The area is not strong in conventional economic measures (the Scottish Borders is part of ‘Southern Scotland’ with Dumfries and Galloway, South Lanarkshire and the three Ayrshire council areas which has the lowest GVA per head of any NUTS2 area in UK). The business base is dominated by micro and small businesses with a loss of larger businesses over recent decades. Understandably, in the context of COVID-19, business focus is overwhelmingly on short-term economic survival and only compliance with priority regulations. Weekly wages for full-time workers are significantly below the national median of £542.9. (2018). The median weekly wage for all full-time workers in the Scottish Borders was £462.7, making it 31st out of Scotland’s Local Authorities.
 - e) Relatively high proportions of the workforce area are engaged in agriculture and retail, while relatively lower proportions than the national average are engaged in higher value sectors such as information and communication, and finance and insurance.
 - f) As noted elsewhere, our transport and digital infrastructure is poor compared to the rest of Scotland.
 - g) As explained elsewhere, a just transition means a dispersal of economic and social benefit more broadly and specifically to regions which have experienced long-term structural challenges. For the Scottish Borders, this means strengthening connectivity within the region and between the Scottish Borders and other places. It also means matching spatial development with policy initiatives designed to spread the benefits of an inclusive economy more widely and equitably. In this way, we will be able to address low wages, the outflow of young people and the retention of value.
6. Please provide here any other information, evidence, or research you consider relevant to the work of the Commission.
- a) At 5.2, the Interim Report precisely encapsulates the nature of the challenge presented by a just transition. If the Scottish Borders, indeed, all parts of Scotland, are to meet the climate challenge, there must be clear alignment between

responsibilities/plans/delivery at local and regional levels and national emissions inventories and emission reduction plans.

- b) For the Scottish Borders (as for every other part of Scotland) understanding and responding effectively to the challenges and opportunities of a just transition is about place. This requires an appreciation of the context and character of the region.
- c) The significance of COVID. Painful and distressing time has reinforced a number of points of relevance to a just transition:
- Broadly, the need for urgent action
 - The enormous scale of action needed
 - The dependencies between issues and the need for a holistic approach
- And most significantly perhaps in the context of the Commission's responsibilities:
- Unaddressed, the massively unequal consequences of action.

d) Finally, we reference a number of specific paragraphs of the Interim Report:

2.1 We need to have a clear understanding of what is required sectorally and regionally, and how expectations align with national ambition, so that, working with Scottish Government and partners, we can identify effectively, and develop plans to deliver on our contribution to national effort.

2.3 This just isn't an expansive enough view. While LAs make up a comparatively small amount of emissions, they are the democratically representative 'local government' of regions, and have a crucial role in leading and marshalling the public sector and wider environmental, industrial and societal effort to reduce emissions e.g. through the application of planning regulation, or through strategic land use to support carbon storage and sequestration.

2.7 et seq. This is a planning issue and a capacity issue. More than a decade of austerity has eroded those very parts of councils which would have been most focused on identifying and garnering the benefit of such developments.

There's a need to recognise both the significance of the cross-sectoral dimension of our efforts – business, but also public sector and third sector, and the importance of the rural context. The rural context is the place where vital aspects of our collective effort will take place in the form of carbon storage and generation of renewable energy. Importantly, these places are also communities with businesses and population centres, and thought must be given to how you develop sustainable economic development within these places, and for that matter, sustain communities and the demographic balance, skills, training and job availability and spread of jobs which are prerequisites of such sustainability. The health of our town centres is critical. They are the synapses of the Scottish Borders, and we must develop a new economic, social and cultural offer if they are not to wither.

3.1 Agreed. Dialogue takes place within certain parameters. Global warming is a fact. The response must be pervasive, radical and impactful if it is to address the scale and urgency of challenge is a precondition of dialogue. See

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/15/covid-19-pandemic-is-fire-drill-for-effects-of-climate-crisis-says-un-official?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

This page is intentionally left blank