

Public Document Pack



**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY, 2024**

A BLENDED MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST. BOSWELLS AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS on WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY, 2024 at 10.00 AM.

All Attendees, including members of the public, should note that the public business in this meeting will be livestreamed and video recorded and that recording will be available thereafter for public view for 180 days.

N. MCKINLAY,
Director Corporate Governance,
16 February 2024

BUSINESS		
1.	Convener's Remarks.	
2.	Apologies for Absence.	
3.	Order of Business.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	Minute (Pages 3 - 16) Consider Minute of Scottish Borders Council held on 25 January 2024 for approval and signing by the Convener. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
6.	Committee Minutes Consider Minutes of the following Committees:- (a) Local Review Body 22 January 2024 (b) Jedburgh Common Good 29 January 2024 (c) External Services-Providers Monitoring Group 6 February 2024 (Please see separate Supplement containing the public Committee Minutes.)	5 mins
7.	Real Action for Prevention: A Vision of Population Health in the Scottish Borders (Pages 17 - 40)	15 mins

	Consider report by Director of Public Health – NHS Borders. (Copy attached.)	
8.	Council Tax 2024/25 (Pages 41 - 46) Consider report by Director Finance and Procurement. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
9.	South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy (Pages 47 - 80) Consider report by Director Resilient Communities. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
10.	Live Borders - Planned Temporary Closures of Facilities (Pages 81 - 86) Consider report by Director Resilient Communities. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
11.	Open Questions	15 mins
12.	Any Other Items Previously Circulated	
13.	Any Other Items Which the Convener Decides Are Urgent	
14.	Private Business Before proceeding with the private business, the following motion should be approved:- “That under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the aforementioned Act.”	
15.	Minute (Pages 87 - 88) Consider private Section of Minute of Scottish Borders Council held on 25 January 2024. (Copy attached.)	1 mins
16.	Committee Minutes (Pages 89 - 90) Consider private Section of Minute of the External Services- Providers Monitoring Group held on 6 February 2024. (Copy attached.)	1 mins

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.**

Please direct any enquiries to Declan Hall Tel: 01835 826556 Email: Declan.Hall@scotborders.gov.uk

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL held in Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells and via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 25 January 2024 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:- Councillors W. McAteer (Convener), J. Anderson, D. Begg, C. Cochrane, J. Cox, L. Douglas, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, E. Jardine, J. Linehan, N. MacKinnon, S. Marshall, D. Moffat, S. Mountford, D. Parker, J. PatonDay, J. Pirone, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, S. Scott, F. Sinclair, E. Small, A. Smart, H. Steel, R. Tatler, V. Thomson, E. Thornton-Nicol, T. Weatherston.

Apologies:- Councillor A. Orr.

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Director Corporate Governance, Director Finance and Procurement, Director Infrastructure and Environment, Director People, Performance and Change, Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Director Resilient Communities, Director Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships, Democratic Services Team Leader

1. CONVENER'S REMARKS

- 1.1 The Convener expressed his congratulations to three people from the Scottish Borders who had been recognised in the New Year Honours List. Best wishes were expressed to Shirley Rogers, awarded a CBE for services to Scottish Community Healthcare, Sally-Ann Loudon, awarded an OBE for services to Local Government, and Stuart Hogg, awarded an MBE for services to Rugby.
- 1.2 The Convener thanked the NHS, Emergency Planning, Council Staff, and Resilient Groups who had been involved in the response to Storm Isha and Jocelyn which had struck the region recently.
- 1.3 The Convener highlighted the outstanding career of Julie Forrest, who had recently won the mixed pairs final of the World Indoor Bowls championship. Julie was also the runner-up in the World Indoor Bowls women's singles final.
- 1.4 The Convener congratulated the Director of Finance and Procurement on 25 years' service with the Council.

DECISION NOTED.

2. MINUTE

The Minute of the Meeting held on 14 December 2023 was considered.

DECISION

AGREED that the Minute be approved and signed by the Convener.

3. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the following Committees had been circulated:-

- (a) Teviot and Liddesdale Area Partnership 7 November 2023
- (b) Selkirk Common Good 13 November 2023
- (c) Jedburgh Common Good 13 November 2023
- (d) Kelso Common Good 14 November 2023
- (e) Eildon Area Partnership 16 November 2023

(f) External Services-Providers Monitoring Group	21 November 2023
(g) Peebles Common Good	22 November 2023
(h) Cheviot Area Partnership	22 November 2023
(i) External Services-Providers Monitoring Group	28 November 2023
(j) Executive Committee	5 December 2023
(k) External Services-Providers Monitoring Group	5 December 2023
(l) Galashiels Common Good	7 December 2023

DECISION

APPROVED the Minutes listed above.

4. SCOTTISH BORDERS BUS NETWORK REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Infrastructure and Environment which provided an overview of the bus network review and proposed a number of recommendations to amend bus services across the network. The Scottish Borders had a large number of bus services, set over a wide geographic area with a dispersed population. The routes had remained largely unchanged for many years. Only a small number of the services operated commercially, and Scottish Borders Council invested significant revenue funding each year to keep 80% of the network operating. Scottish Borders Council had commissioned a full bus network review in 2022, with the support of the City Deal Workforce Mobility Project. It sought to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing commercial and supported bus services, and make recommendations, where appropriate, that could improve the network in relation to better meeting potential outcomes and/or improving service efficiency. A wide scale community and business engagement exercise was undertaken to identify the needs of communities and to assess new travel demand that was not currently met by the existing public transport network. That information had been used to design a new network that was focused on key trip attractors, such as the Borders General Hospital, rather than servicing key road corridors across the region. The review found that overall, the majority of the network operated well and provided sufficient coverage but there were opportunities to increase the frequency of inter-town services and town services, whilst looking at improving the operational durations and the timing of services to key employment, education and healthcare sites. The review highlighted the opportunity for more demand responsive services to be introduced across the Scottish Borders to link remote rural communities into key towns. An economic assessment undertaken had identified that the bus network provided significant economic and social value to the region, and that SBC's support for non-commercial services provided a good rate of return. The recommendations in the report would be delivered as existing Service contracts expired. However, due to the return of some service contracts by operators in the last six months, the Passenger Transport team had already utilised the analysis and recommendations of the Bus Network Review to implement changes to mitigate the loss of services where possible and sustain the existing commercial network. Members welcomed the report and its recommendations, highlighted the considerable work which had been undertaken, and expressed thanks to the Principal Transport Officer, Mr Gordon Grant, for his efforts.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) note the comprehensive assessment undertaken by the Bus Network review to identify changes that could deliver improved bus services for the communities and businesses of the Scottish Borders;**
- (b) approve the proposed service changes set out in the report;**
- (c) approve the proposed procurement approach set out in the report. Acknowledging the benefits that longer term contracts would bring for competition and enabling operators to invest in fleet and services, whilst committing Scottish Borders Council to longer term financial commitments; and**

- (d) **approve the need for a report to be brought back to Scottish Borders Council to outline options if the tender returns exceed the existing budget provision.**

5. **SCOTTISH BORDERS CONSULTATIVE DRAFT LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2024-2029**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment which provided an update on the consultative draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and an overview of the consultation process. The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 placed a duty on Local Authorities to prepare, publish and update a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES). The LHEES would be the core strategy and delivery programme for reducing energy demand and decarbonising heat supply. The proposed consultative draft LHEES had been prepared in accordance with Scottish Government Guidance which set out the drivers, scope and requirements of the strategy. The Chief Planning and Housing Officer, Mr Ian Aikman, presented a summary of the key points of the report and highlighted that deliverability formed one of the key themes of the LHEES, which was expected to be regularly updated and amended as changes took place over time. The Principal Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy Officer, Mr Neil Robertson, provided a summary of the timeline for the LHEES, explaining that it had become a statutory duty for all Local Authorities in May 2022. The Council was required to publish its strategy and delivery plans. Both of those plans had to be renewed on a five-year cycle. Members welcomed the report but stressed that officers needed to work with urgency to ensure that the action which needed to be taken was progressed, particularly relating to those properties which were poorly insulated. In response to a question regarding a lack of Council involvement in tackling local labour issues, Mr Aikman outlined that a variety of initiatives involved in the LHEES which required work with third party organisations and groups and undertook to work to address the feedback received into the revised document. It was highlighted that a change to planning laws to provide authorities with the power to insist that new developments must include the most energy efficient systems would have a positive impact. In response to a question regarding whether work was ongoing with partners to try and promote the take-up of offers such as interest free loans to undertake home improvements related to energy efficiency, Mr Robertson explained that events were becoming more prevalent, and that work was required to ensure that homeowners were sufficiently informed of what was available and appropriate to their homes’.

**DECISION
AGREED to:-**

- (a) **note the draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy;**
- (b) **note that the final Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy would be presented to Council before the end of the financial year; and**
- (c) **approve the plans for formal consultation.**

6. **COUNCIL TAX – SECOND HOMES**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Resilient Communities which provided information on the discretion available to Local Authorities to charge up to 200% Council Tax on second homes from 1 April 2024 and recommended a change in policy with effect from 1 April 2024. Legislation which gave Local Authorities the power to double Council Tax on second homes was approved on 14 December 2023, and aimed to prioritise housing for living in and to bring the Second Homes Policy in line with Long Term Empty Council Tax Policy. There were currently approximately 1055 second homes within Scottish Borders Council which were charged 100% Council Tax. Introducing the policy could generate an additional annual income in the region of £1.5 million. Given the increased administrative burden, it had been suggested that some of the additional income be retained by Customer Advice & Support Service to allow the recruitment of one additional staff member.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) to utilise the flexibility permitted to introduce a 200% Council Tax charge on second homes from 1 April 2024;**
- (b) that £30k of the additional income to be raised be used to fund an additional staff member to administer the new arrangements; and**
- (c) to note the further discretionary provision and not to extend the statutory 6 month relief timescale for properties undergoing repairs or renovations.**

7. NON-DOMESTIC RATES EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Resilient Communities which provided an update on the review of the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) Empty Property Relief Policy approved at Council on 16 February 2023, and which set out the recommendation for a revised policy to take effect from 1 April 2024. The Scottish Government had made an annual fixed sum available for the next three years to support the revised policy. Scottish Borders Council's allocation of the funding was £1.15m for 2023/24. Local Authorities could retain any income from business rates they charged on empty properties between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2026. Across Scotland every Local Authority was looking at their own policy with the aim of bringing empty properties back into use, and a number were looking to reduce the relief they award on empty properties to support that aim. There were 627 empty properties receiving relief as of 6 December 2023, from the 9,368 entries on the Valuation Roll for the Scottish Borders Valuation Area. 74% of those empty properties were in towns.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) to approve the amended Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief Policy, which reflected the changes outlined in the report, to award 50% relief for 3 months, followed by 10% for a maximum of 9 months after which no relief was awarded; and**
- (b) that the amended policy be effective from 1 April 2024.**

8. COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2023 FEEDBACK

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Resilient Communities which provided an update on the feedback gathered from the nine separate Community Conversations which took place during September 2023 with Elected Members, Senior Officers and members of the Public and to seek approval on the next steps. The feedback from the Community Conversations was contained in Appendix 1 to the report. The main issues raised from the feedback had been captured along with the proposed service response. The Conversations allowed the community members to share their thoughts about what really mattered to them and their community and they formed a key part of how the Council engaged with communities and developed its plans. A Community Engagement Strategy was being developed and would come to Council in due course for approval. In the meantime, planning was now underway for the Community Conversation programme for 2024, and it was proposed that this be developed with the input from Elected Members, Area Partnerships and other key stakeholders. Members welcomed the report and highlighted that the events had been a positive to attend, but required further works to improve their format and ability to engage with the general public. Members encouraged one another to hold surgeries at locations where the public were already in attendance such as farmers markets to enable them to interact with their constituents. The Director – Resilient Communities agreed that a range of different ways of engaging with the public needed to be utilised to ensure that as diverse a spectrum of views were heard. Mrs Craig confirmed that the data in the report had been amended to remove any personal references or items which could allow

individuals to be identified by their feedback. Common themes had been selected and presented. Work would take place on tailoring the feedback for presenting to stakeholders.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to note the feedback received from the Community Conversations contained in Appendix 1 to the report, which would be considered in the development of the 2024/25 Council Plan which would be considered alongside the 2024/25 budget;**
- (b) that the feedback be shared with each Area Partnerships Community Councils and with Schools;**
- (c) that different options be considered to develop the programme for 2024 along with input from Elected Members and Area Partnerships; and**
- (d) to build upon the successful youth engagement and to tie in with existing youth forums to continue conversations with young people.**

9. PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Resilient Communities which provided an update on the delivery of the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Programme which had allocated £23m of capital funding to Scottish Local Authorities, payable in the financial year 2023/24 to support town centre regeneration projects and community wealth building. Scottish Government and Council Leaders had agreed that Local Authorities would receive a share of funding to help support place-based investment over a five-year period, with the current financial year being the third year of the programme. The Scottish Borders had been allocated £550k based on a combination of total population and existing deprivation levels, which required to be financially committed by the end of the current financial year. Council Officers had identified four potential projects that £147k of funding could be allocated to within the current financial year. Those proposals had been recommended for approval by the Place Partnership which was an independent group of experienced partners from the public, private and third sectors. Details of the proposals were outlined in the report and Officers were working with a number of groups and organisations to try and bring forward additional projects to a Committee later in the year with a view to fully allocating the funding from Scottish Government during the current financial year. Members welcomed the report and the encouraging news, particularly highlighting the difficulty in delivering shovel-ready projects which could access funding. Local Members highlighted that the Linton Hotspur Community Football Club had delivered successful projects with a range of local groups.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) note the progress made to deliver the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme which was intended to provide funding for Scottish Local Authorities over a five-year period;**
- (b) commit £147k from the allocation in the current financial year to four projects throughout the Scottish Borders as detailed in the report;**
- (c) delegate authority to the Director of Resilient Communities and Director of Finance and Procurement, in consultation with the Economic Development Elected Members Reference Group, the Convenor of the Council, and the Leader of the Independent Group to approve local projects as required, taking account of the recommendations from the Place Partnership; and**

- (d) **note that further papers would be brought back to an appropriate Committee at a suitable time which would provide further detail on proposed place-based projects and future delivery.**

10. **PENSION FUND EMPLOYERS (SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL) CONTRIBUTION RATE**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Finance and Procurement which informed Scottish Borders Council of a decision taken by Scottish Borders Pension Fund Committee and Board setting the Scottish Borders Council employers contribution rate from 2024/25 onwards. The decision was taken on the 17th of January 2024 and the report supporting the decision was contained in Appendix 1 to the report. The report contained in the Appendix explained that, following the most recent triennial actuarial revaluation of the fund, it was assessed that the Fund was 134% funded and recommended that the Scottish Borders Council contribution rate move to 17% from 2024/25 through to 2027/28. That recommendation – and all of the other recommendations in the Report were agreed by the Pension Fund Committee and Board. The Director – Finance and Procurement presented the report and the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee outlined that the decision made on the 17 January 2024 had been taken solely with the management and security of the Fund in mind.

DECISION

AGREED to note the content of the report contained in Appendix 1 to the report and that the recommendations in the report were agreed by the Pension Fund Committee and Board on 17 January 2024.

11. **PUBLIC SPACE CCTV AND TOWN CENTRE CONNECTIVITY**

With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting held on 28 September 2023, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships which provided an update on progress made on developing the CCTV proposal and an overview on the next steps for Borders wide connectivity including town centres, and the timeline for a full business case being brought back to Council for approval in February 2024. The previous report had set out the potential options, benefits and future opportunities available to Scottish Borders for investment in Public Space CCTV and Town Centre Wi-Fi and gained agreement to proceed with a scheme for seven Borders towns for CCTV. The report outlined the current provision of CCTV and detailed the benefits and other considerations for potential investment. Taking into account that many of the CCTV systems were approaching a point of disrepair and current analogue systems would become obsolete as of 2025, the benefits included public safety and detection of crime; the ability to collect meaningful data, for both Police Scotland and the Council; and using the investment in CCTV to scope out further use cases for the technology and better understand the market, looking at solutions such as cloud-based CCTV and 5G connectivity. Considerations included the options submitted by CGI, including the outline financial implications; a move to a principle of investment and modernisation to reflect community priorities; development of a fully defined proposal and costed business case with funding arrangements coming back to a subsequent Council meeting for final approval; Consultation be undertaken with other towns and communities to determine views, practicalities and priorities for potential future CCTV and Town Centre Wi-Fi investment opportunities. In response to a question regarding whether the new CCTV systems would be wireless or wired, the Portfolio Manager, Ms Naomi Sweeney advised that after exploring the latest technology, and taking account of security concerns, a decision had been made to progress with wired cameras. Regarding engagement with the Hawick Town Team, Ms Sweeney explained that conversations had been ongoing and that she was content to explore further meeting dates with them. In response to a question regarding the proposed timescales involved with the business case, Ms Sweeney provided assurance that due to ongoing consultation and discussions a business case could be progressed quickly. Members welcomed the report and expressed their hopes that the business case would be ready for Council in February.

DECISION

NOTED:-

- (a) **progress made in developing proposals with CGI and the receipt of comparative costs for CCTV for the Scottish Borders;**
- (b) **progress on bench marking and understanding of the market, carried out with partner organisations, specialist advisors and other local authorities;**
- (c) **engagement with community owned CCTV models in the Borders and proposals developed by Hawick Community Council; and**
- (d) **development of the CCTV proposals to further Scottish Borders Council’s aspirations as a “Smart, connected rural region” and considering Town Centre Wi-fi in a future connectivity plan to complement future investment opportunities in connectivity and technology offered through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.**

12. REPROVISIONING OF NIGHT SUPPORT SERVICE

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships which explained that further to the Night Support Service pathfinders in Tweeddale and Berwickshire and subsequent public consultation, proposed a reduction in the number of Night Support Service teams and also the introduction of dawn/twilight shifts. The report also proposed that these teams would provide a rapid response service for any TEC activations in addition to providing planned care for those with complex and critical care needs. Given the outcome of both pathfinders it was evident that a night support service continued to be required, but given the alternative means of providing this service, it was proposed a reduction from five Night Support teams to two. The proposal was described fully within the IJB paper contained in Appendix 1 to the report. Those two teams would continue to provide planned, critical overnight support to individuals with complex health needs, whilst also providing a Rapid Response service to TEC activations. It was also proposed to introduce a strict eligibility criterion for critical overnight support together with Dawn (6am-noon) and Twilight (6pm-midnight) shifts. The Director – Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships presented the report and highlighted that the recommendations followed on from 2 pilots. Members welcomed the report and agreed that its recommendations were carefully considered with the interests of patients and staff taken into account.

DECISION

AGREED to note the contents of the Integrated Joint Board paper contained in Appendix 1 to the report.

13. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting held on 26 October 2023, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive which provided a summary of what was being done to prevent, and where necessary, address antisocial behaviour among young people. The report was presented in response to a motion by Councillor Pirone agreed by Council on 26 October 2023 whereby members recognised the importance of addressing anti-social behaviour among young people in our communities, valued positive youth engagement and acknowledged the need for a safe environment that promoted the growth of our young residents. In approving the motion Members sought information as to what the Council was currently doing to address anti-social behaviour among young people and whether there was more that could be done within the Scottish Borders in partnership with others. Antisocial behaviour involving young people recorded by Police Scotland was expected to account for fewer than 13% of total calls during 2023/24. Youth warning letters issued by the council funded police Community Action Team (CAT) had been on a downward trend, and the Council’s Antisocial Behaviour Unit have had very few referrals involving young people. Members welcomed the report and acknowledged that the report set out the Council’s response well. It was agreed that an extra recommendation be included which would set up a Member/Officer Working Group to identify further solutions assessing what more could be done to tackle anti-social behaviour in the communities of the Scottish Borders. That Working Group would be expected to take advice from young people and

external experts. It was highlighted that anti-social behaviour was not solely an issue caused by younger people.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **note the content of the report;**
- (b) **endorse the suggested enhancements and improvements across engagements with young people to expand diversionary activities within communities; and**
- (c) **set up a Member/Officer Working Group to identify further solutions to tackle anti-social behaviour in our communities, including taking advice from young people and external experts.**

14. DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR AUGUST 2024 – JULY 2025

There had been circulated copies of the draft calendar of meetings covering the period of 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025. In response to a question regarding whether it would be possible to amend the meeting dates for the Police Community Action Team Member/Officer Strategic Oversight Group so that they were held on Monday, the Democratic Services Team Leader undertook to investigate whether such a change was possible.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the draft Calendar of Meetings for the period of 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

15. MOTION BY COUNCILLOR ANDERSON

Councillor Anderson, seconded by Councillor Tatler moved approval of the following Motion as detailed on the agenda:

“The Scottish Borders Council recognizes the ongoing transition towards a cashless society, primarily driven by Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). This motion aims to address the social and financial implications associated with this transition. One major concern is the potential exacerbation of revenue inequality and the digital divide. It is crucial to ensure that vulnerable populations have equal access to digital financial services to prevent marginalization. Therefore, the Scottish Borders Council urges the UK Government to take necessary measures to mitigate these concerns and ensure a fair and inclusive transition to digital currency with the retention of cash based finances.

1. Acknowledging the Transition: The Scottish Borders Council acknowledges the ongoing transition towards a cashless society, primarily driven by the introduction of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). SBC acknowledges the removal of cash will have a detrimental effect on our rural population.

2. Social and Financial Implications: Recognizing that the transition towards a cashless society has social and financial implications, including concerns related to revenue inequality and the digital divide.

3. Exacerbation of Revenue Inequality: The Council expresses concern that the transition towards a cashless society may exacerbate revenue inequality, as vulnerable populations may face difficulties in accessing and utilizing digital financial services. Which shows a need for cash based finances in rural areas.

4. Digital Divide: The Council acknowledges the potential for a digital divide to widen as a result of the transition towards a cashless society. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring equal access to digital monetary services for all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

5. Preventing Marginalization: The Council emphasizes the need to prevent the marginalization of vulnerable populations during the transition towards a cashless society. It highlights the importance of providing adequate support and resources to ensure equal access and inclusion. The CBDC must be an addition to cash not a replacement to prevent marginalisation.

6. UK Government Action: The Scottish Borders Council urges the UK Government to take necessary measures to address the social and financial implications associated with the transition towards a cashless society. This includes implementing policies and initiatives that promote equal access to digital financial services and mitigate the potential exacerbation of revenue inequality and the digital divide.

7. Collaboration and Consultation: The Council encourages the UK Government to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, financial institutions, and community organizations, to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the transition to a cash and CBDC society.

8. Reporting and Monitoring: The Council requests that the UK Government provide regular updates and reports on the progress made in addressing the social and financial implications of the transition towards a cash and CDDB society. This will enable transparency and accountability in the decision- making process.

9. Dissemination of Information: The Council emphasizes the importance of raising awareness among the public about the transition towards a cashless society and its potential Negative impact. It encourages the UK Government to engage in public participation events to ensure that individuals are given the chance to have their say and prepared for the changes ahead.

10. Adoption and Implementation: The Scottish Borders Council calls upon all relevant authorities and stakeholders to adopt and implement the necessary measures to address the social and financial implications of the transition towards a cashless society, in line with the principles of equality, inclusivity, and social justice. By passing this motion, the Scottish Borders Council aims to contribute to a fair and inclusive transition towards a cash and digital currency-based society, ensuring that vulnerable populations are not marginalized and that equal access to digital financial services is guaranteed.”

Councillors Anderson and Tatler spoke in favour of the Motion which was unanimously approved.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Motion as detailed above.

16. OPEN QUESTIONS

The questions submitted by Councillors Thomson, Begg and Anderson were answered.

DECISION

NOTED the replies as detailed in Appendix I to this Minute.

17. URGENT BUSINESS

Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Convenor was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraphs should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. The Motion was accepted as an urgent

18. URGENT MOTION BY COUNCILLOR LEAGH DOUGLAS

Councillor Leigh Douglas, seconded by Councillor Carol Hamilton moved approval of the following Motion as detailed on the agenda:

“Acknowledging Finance Secretary Shona Robison's announcement of a 1,200 funded university places cut in Scotland due to financial constraints, the council expresses deep concern about the potential £28.5m reduction's impact on higher education stability and opportunities for our young population.

Recognising the need for clarity, especially for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, this council urgently asks the leader to write to the Depute First Minister.

We emphasise that this communication articulates the council's concerns and underscores the critical importance of understanding how these fiscal adjustments will affect the educational prospects of young people in the Scottish Borders.”

Councillors Douglas and Hamilton spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Sinclair, seconded by Councillor Smart proposed an amendment that the following be inserted prior to the original Motion:-

“SBC recognises the benefits of free education and notes that 690,000 students have benefitted from free tuition fees at university since 2007.

SBC notes that 1,200 additional funded university places were introduced as a temporary response to the pandemic and SQA grading during that period, and the change announced as part of the draft 2024-25 budget brings numbers back to pre-Covid levels and still allocates nearly £2 billion to universities and colleges in Scotland....”

Councillor Sinclair and Smart spoke in favour of the amendment.

Councillor Robson proposed that the amendment be altered to remove reference to “since 2007” which was accepted by Councillor Sinclair.

Councillor Thornton-Nicol, seconded by Councillor Thomson, proposed that the vote be taken by roll call and this was unanimously approved.

Members discussed the motion and the amendment, and a vote was held the results of which were as follows:

Roll Call Vote

<i>Motion by Councillor Leagh Douglas</i>	<i>Amendment by Councillor Sinclair</i>
<i>Councillor Leagh Douglas</i>	<i>Councillor Anderson</i>
<i>Councillor Greenwell</i>	<i>Councillor Begg</i>
<i>Councillor Carol Hamilton</i>	<i>Councillor Cochrane</i>
<i>Councillor Scott Hamilton</i>	<i>Councillor Cox</i>
<i>Councillor Jardine</i>	<i>Councillor Marshall Douglas</i>
<i>Councillor Linehan</i>	<i>Councillor Mackinnon</i>
<i>Councillor Marshall</i>	<i>Councillor Moffat</i>
<i>Councillor McAteer</i>	<i>Councillor PatonDay</i>
<i>Councillor Mountford</i>	<i>Councillor Ramage</i>
<i>Councillor Parker</i>	<i>Councillor Robson</i>
<i>Councillor Pirone</i>	<i>Councillor Sinclair</i>
<i>Councillor Richards</i>	<i>Councillor Smart</i>
<i>Councillor Rowley</i>	<i>Councillor Steel</i>
<i>Councillor Scott</i>	<i>Councillor Tatler</i>
<i>Councillor Small</i>	<i>Councillor Thomson</i>
<i>Councillor Weatherston</i>	<i>Councillor Thornton-Nicol</i>

There being an equality of votes the Convener exercised his casting vote in favour of the motion. The motion was accordingly carried.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Motion as detailed above.

19. **PENSION FUND CREDIT**

It was highlighted by Councillor Thornton-Nicol that over £3.6m of Pension Credit remained unclaimed in the Scottish Borders in the current financial year. Members were asked to encourage their constituents who were in receipt of state pension to undertake a pension credit check to see if they were entitled to extra support. Posters and leaflets had been prepared and would be handed out and placed across the region. Those leaflets included a QR code and a telephone number which allowed callers to speak to a trained officer who could help assist them and determine if they were eligible for Pension Credit.

20. **PRIVATE BUSINESS**

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in Appendix II to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 6, 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

21. **Minute**

The private section of the Council Minute of 14 December 2023 was approved.

22. **Committee Minutes**

The private sections of the Committee Minutes as detailed in paragraph 3 of this Minute were approved.

The meeting concluded at 1.05 p.m.

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
25 JANUARY 2024
APPENDIX I

OPEN QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Thomson

To the Executive Member for Roads Development and Maintenance

Will the Council consider moving from the provision of cut Christmas trees to the provision of a living tree to those communities currently in receipt of a cut Christmas tree? Whilst it is recognised that there would be a cost implication for provision and planting of a living tree, these could be mitigated by the reduction of delivery journeys from plantation to site, annual cost of tree (potential replacement thereof as happened this year), all giving a significant benefit to the environment, as well as Council finances.

Reply from Councillor Greenwell

I would like to first of all acknowledge the challenges faced in the provision of Christmas trees last month. As outlined previously, the contractor experienced some significant supply issues which, in trying to mitigate the impact of, caused further problems in the discrepancy of provision across communities. I would like to again assure members that the specification and standard of trees ordered was the same as in previous years. We have received an apology from the contractor for the issues that we experienced this year.

Living Christmas trees are something that Officers have been exploring as a sustainable alternative to annual tree provision in communities. As the question states, the costs of one-off provision of a Living tree to communities could offer a more financially and environmentally sustainable means of Christmas tree provision. The trees could be planted at an agreed site in those communities that can accommodate a living Christmas tree. Where relevant, the one off investment could ensure communities have a recurring, consistent standard of Christmas Tree for a number of years. We have had some approaches from communities noting interest in this approach – it is acknowledged that not all locations currently used would necessarily be appropriate, and this would require further consideration with communities.

It is proposed to review the wider issue of Christmas tree provision by Scottish Borders Council to communities across the region – the current budget consultation includes a question around Christmas tree provision so we await the outcomes of this consultation process.

Question from Councillor Begg

To the Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Are there any plans to share transport resources with partner agencies?

In particular has SBC explored the possibility of sharing NHS Borders patient transport / delivery services with SBC bus / transport services?

Reply from Councillor Linehan

SBC are regularly engaging with partner agencies to see how we can work more effectively to achieve common goals and avoid duplication of effort and resource. Such initiatives depend on resource and capacity which can often impede progress.

However, our Passenger Transport team re-engaged with NHS Borders on the 11 January to arrange a meeting to explore the potential of sharing vehicles and resources. The objective being to support the delivery of services and addressing the pressures are currently facing whilst also maximising use of vehicles we have available.

Officers have provided dates for meetings and will get together with colleagues at NHS Borders to look at options.

We will update members in due course of the outcomes of discussions.

Supplementary

Councillor Begg asked if Councillor Linehan would be prepared to report back in 6 months on how progress was being made on partnership working, particularly given ongoing budget pressures and the need to maintain services. Councillor Linehan agreed to provide comments after 6 months.

Question from Councillor Anderson

To the Executive Member for Community Engagement

Under the Single Outcome Agreement and the SBC strategy, SBC measure the median wage against other regions of Scotland. What progress is being made to meeting the target?

Reply from Councillor Cochrane

The purpose of the Single Outcome Agreement was to specify the improvement priorities that had been identified for the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership and which focused the partnership on delivering better outcomes for the people of the Scottish Borders and Scotland.

In the 2013 Single Outcome Agreement the Partnership agreed performance measures with targets set at internals over a 10 -year period. At that time the following measures were recorded:

- the gross weekly earnings (residence based) as 90% of the Scottish average. The target was to increase this to 95% by 2023. In 2023 the median gross weekly earnings (residence based) were recorded as 96% of the Scottish average.
- the gross weekly earnings (workplace based) as 81% of the Scottish average. The target was to increase this to 85% by 2023. In 2023 the median gross weekly earnings (workplace based) were recorded as 93% of the Scottish average.

Both of the targets identified for 2023, in the Single Outcome Agreement, were exceeded.

During the period covered by the Single Outcome Agreement the National Living Wage was introduced. This has been adopted by a number of organisations, with 55 registered as living wage employers in the Borders, including:

- Scottish Borders Council
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Borders College
- NHS Borders, and
- The four main Registered Social landlords in the Borders

Scottish Borders Council adopted the Living Wage for Modern Apprentices in April 2023, before many other local authorities in Scotland.

The multi-agency Scottish Borders Living Wage Group works to address the rise of in-work poverty and rebuild prosperity within local communities.

It should be noted that the Single Outcome Agreement was superseded by the Community Plan following the enactment of the Community Empowerment Scotland (Scotland) Act in 2015. The Community Planning Partnership is working to address wider factors contributing to poverty and the following improvement outcomes have been identified:

- Help mitigate against the financial challenges of day to day living for those who are most affected; and
- Children and young people from low-income households are supported to develop life skills to help them succeed in life.

I also have some supplementary information on the actions that other partners have taken during that time which I will share with you.

REAL ACTION FOR PREVENTION:

a vision of population health in the
Scottish Borders

Report of the Director of Public Health 2023
NHS Borders



FOREWARD

I am delighted to share with you the Director of Public Health Report for 2023, which is my first report for the Scottish Borders. A number of logistic challenges meant that we are slightly later than intended, but we aim to catch up this year! As you might expect, this is a team effort taking the skills and knowledge of many people within the department.

The report is in two sections:

- The first section that focuses on prevention bringing to the attention of our partners the variety of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention interventions available. I want to help address some of the lack of clarity I have found, with terminology often presented as prevention/early intervention but meaning different things entirely.
- The second section shares some of the work of the department of Public Health carried out in 2023. We are an outward facing organisation that seeks to lead, encourage, co-ordinate and improve the efforts of local organisations, groups and allies to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone that lives, works or is educated in the Scottish Borders.

These reports specifically are:

- * Joint Health Improvement Team Annual Report
- * Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Highlight Annual Report
- * Joint Health Protection Plan
- * Screening Programmes Report
- * A report on Oral Health

This is an important time for public health in Borders and in Scotland. Public Health Priorities are not just for public health departments to deliver. We need to be tackling the fundamental causes of health inequalities, including prevention. This means working through our partnerships with others and thinking about how we work with local communities to shape our efforts. We will be bringing our strategy, Tackling Health Inequalities in the Scottish Borders (THIS Borders) to public attention in the next few months but we have already begun by bringing together stakeholders and partners in a series of workshops to share our emerging findings and to help shape the way the evidence is presented and prioritised. This report is therefore a prelude for that work, but is nonetheless important as it also firmly establishes what prevention means to the public health profession and thus used as a point of common understanding with partners.

Dr Sohail S Bhatti
Director of Public Health
NHS Borders

CONTENTS

Foreword	2
Contents	3

Section 1	
The case for prevention in acute times	4
- What is prevention?	4
- Evidence for a preventative approach	5
- Scottish burden of disease	7
- Primary prevention first.....	7
Mobilising a preventative system across Scottish Borders	9
- Prevention in health care	9
- Partnerships and community development	14
- Communications and community engagement	18
- Evaluation and monitoring	19
- Environment: flooding and climate adaptions	19
- Local activity	20
- Conclusions and recommendations	21

Section 2	
Public Health activity in Scottish Borders 2023	22
- Joint Health Improvement Team Annual Report	22
- Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Annual Report	22
- Joint Health Protection Annual Report	22
- Screening Programmes Report	22
- Oral Health Report	22

References	23
-------------------------	-----------

The Case for Prevention in Acute Times

What is prevention?

The concept of prevention is one of the fundamental pillars of Public Health and government policy. In broad terms, the three most discussed types of prevention are primary, secondary and tertiary which were concepts introduced in the late 1940s.

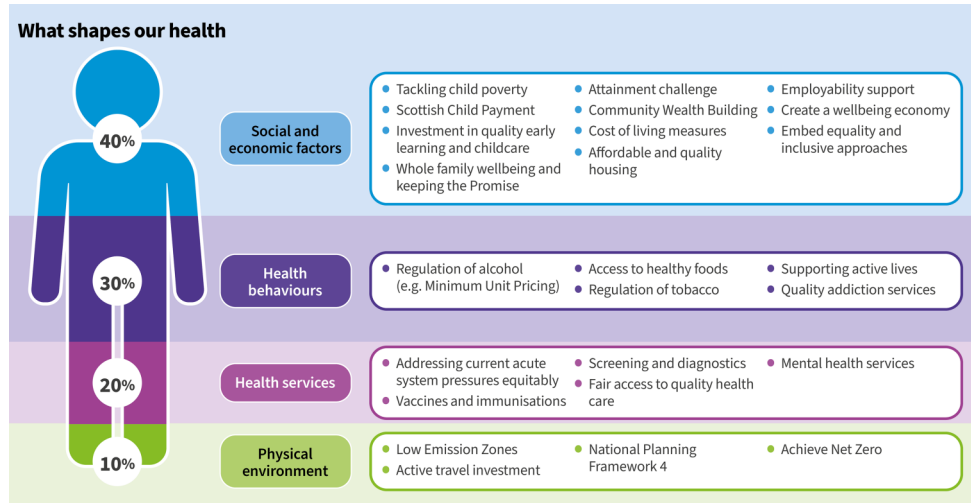
Primary prevention is where action is being taken to stop a condition, disease or illness ever occurring within an individual who is at risk. The target group is usually healthy people who are free of the issue in question but who have associated risk factors. Examples of primary prevention include immunising older adult care home residents against COVID, influenza and shingles (older people). Other examples include seatbelt legislation (drivers and passengers), stopping smoking in public spaces (workers) or violence, as a societal issue.

Secondary prevention is where action is being taken to detect the early signs of a specific disease or issue and intervene before symptoms can develop. The target group are those who have a disease (or precursor to the disease) but are apparently healthy with no visible symptoms. Examples of secondary prevention include screening programmes, redesigning streets to reduce traffic speeds, controlling blood pressure and managing high cholesterol to prevent vascular disease.

Tertiary prevention is where action is being taken to reduce the impact of a disease that has already manifested in an individual, prevent any further deterioration, maintain quality of life, improve function and minimise suffering. The target group are those with an established disease or condition. Examples of tertiary prevention include regular reviews (blood sugar, feet, eyes) for people with type 2 diabetes, providing domestic violence refuges, addressing homelessness and cardiac rehabilitation programmes.

Primordial prevention is a newer concept that was introduced in 1978 which focuses on preventing the development of risk factors for diseases and health problems before they even arise. Unlike primary prevention, which aims to prevent the onset of a specific disease or condition in individuals who already have risk factors, primordial prevention targets the root causes and underlying conditions that create those risk factors in the first place. Examples of primordial prevention strategies include:

- **Health education and promotion:** Providing individuals with accurate information about healthy behaviours, such as proper nutrition, regular physical activity, and avoiding addictive substances, can help prevent the development of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and cancer.
- **Environmental interventions:** Addressing environmental factors that can contribute to disease, such as air and water pollution, hazardous chemicals, and unsafe housing conditions, can help reduce the risk of developing certain health problems.
- **Policy changes:** Implementing policies that support healthy choices, such as taxes on unhealthy foods and beverages, restrictions on tobacco advertising, and increased access to parks and recreational facilities, can create a healthier environment for everyone.
- **Early childhood interventions:** Providing support and resources to families during pregnancy and early childhood can help ensure that children have a healthy start in life and are less likely to develop chronic diseases.

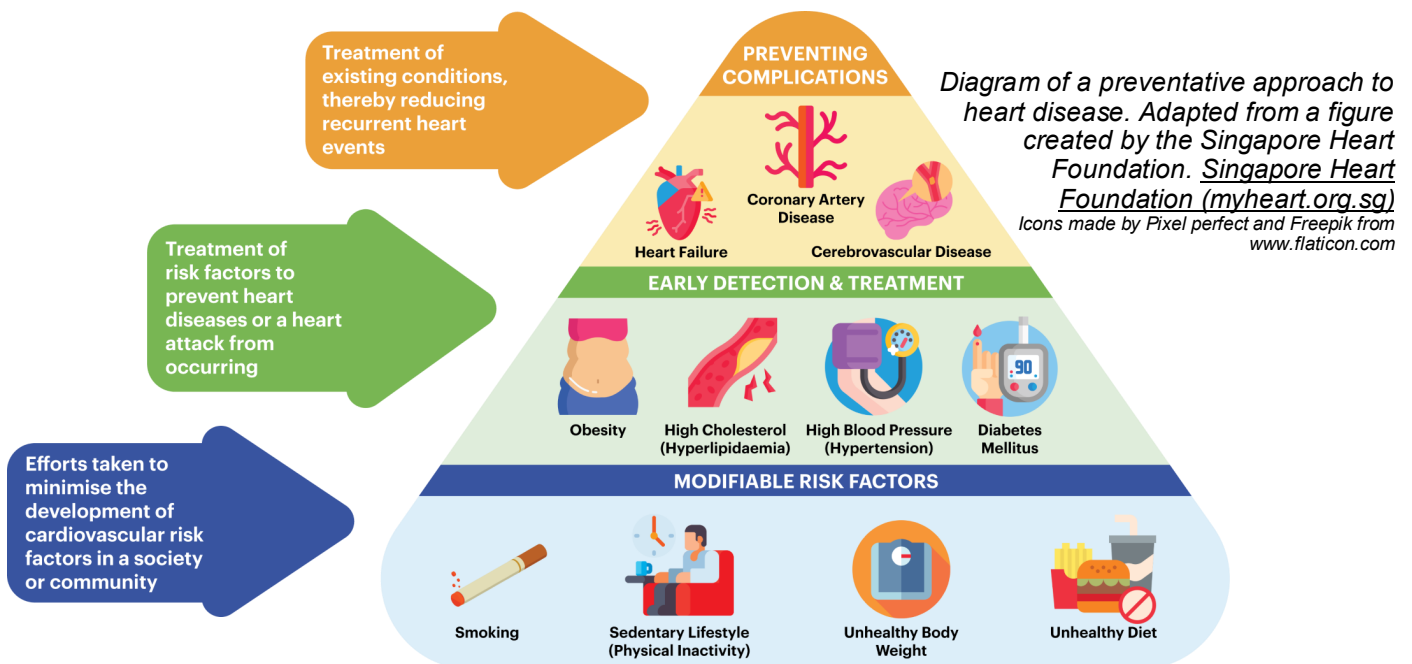


Source: Public Health Scotland

Adapted from The Kings Fund (<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/vision-population-health>)

If we take the example of drug use and of addiction to opioid drugs, education for children and young people about the harms of drugs to avoid even trying them is primary prevention. Legislation to limit harmful supply or access would be primordial prevention. Limiting the supply of drugs through criminal justice work are secondary preventive activities. Ill-health and death are prevented by the distribution of naloxone (the antidote to opiate overdose) as well as effective treatment and can be considered tertiary prevention.

One of the key things is that prevention is not restricted to disease or clinical issues, though that is where these concepts originated. Prevention approaches and concepts can be applied to a broad range of activities, and often require engagement across the whole of society as a result. Heart disease, for example, is still the biggest cause of death in the Scottish Borders. A preventative approach would tackle the issue using all domains of prevention.



Evidence for a preventative approach

Prevention activities have a reduction impact on mortality (death rates) and also on morbidity (rates of illness). Mortality rates are a useful measure of population health; they are unequivocal and easy to measure through death registration data. In 2020 in Scotland, 27% (21.6% in Borders) [1] of all deaths were considered “avoidable”, that is, they could have been avoided by preventative interventions [2]. People who lived in the most deprived areas in Scotland that year were four times more likely to die of a preventable disease than those who lived in the least

deprived areas. In this context, calls for greater focus on preventive care are coming from across the system: from the Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services in 2011 [3] the Health Inequalities Policy Review in 2013 [4], the Scottish Chief Medical Officer's report 2023 [5], and the NHS Long Term Plan [6] in England. Ten years after the publication of landmark work "Fair Society, Healthy Lives" [7] Professor Michael Marmot reiterated his recommendation that preventative strategies are a vital tool to reduce and prevent health inequalities. When acute services (such as hospital wards and package of care provision) are under extreme pressure, as they have been during the COVID pandemic and the recovery phase, there is a drive towards providing and funding immediate care services in response to immediate population demands. Unfortunately, this creates an endless cycle of crises with little prospect for prevention. Prioritising prevention within health and social care is beneficial for organisations and for individuals and it could be argued, for the health of our NHS overall. When we intervene early in chronic diseases to manage and limit complications, we reduce pressure on emergency, acute and frontline services by stabilising patients before they reach a crisis point. Hospital stay is inherently risky, for example, due to the presence of hospital acquired infections, and the potential for errors and mistakes. When we support people to maintain their health and live independently at home, we reduce the number of admissions and decrease the length of stay in hospital. By helping to build up social networks for people in the community, using community development approaches, we encourage care in the community, and avoid admission to hospital. Prevention leads to a better quality of life for more of the population, by increasing the years spent in good health [8] and also sustain & support independent living.

There are clear economic benefits to a prevention approach. Reduced service pressures and a healthier population will lead to significant financial savings, societal benefits, and allows resources to be redistributed to other areas of need. A study by the University of York [9] aimed to try to quantify the difference in cost per Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) for public health interventions versus general NHS treatments. A QALY is a way of measuring one year lived in perfect health. They found that for preventative work, the cost per QALY was £3,800, compared to £13,500 for treatments. This supports the position of Public Health Scotland, the King's Fund and UKHSA; that investing in preventative work is of economic benefit [10].

What is a QALY?

A QALY, or Quality-Adjusted Life Year, is a unit of measurement used in health economics and healthcare decision-making to assess the value and impact of medical treatments, interventions, or healthcare programs. It combines both the quantity and quality of life gained as a result of a particular healthcare intervention. QALYs are used to compare the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different healthcare interventions.

The concept of a QALY is based on the idea that not all years of life are equal in terms of health and well-being. A year of perfect health is considered to be equivalent to 1 QALY, while a year of less than perfect health is valued at less than 1 QALY, typically on a scale from 0 (equivalent to death) to 1 (perfect health). For example, if a person's health-related quality of life is reduced to 0.5 due to a medical condition or disability, that year would be equivalent to 0.5 QALY. A value in £s can be attributed to 1 QALY.

Here's how the calculation works:

Determine the health state or quality of life associated with a particular medical condition or intervention, often on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 represents death and 1 represents perfect health

Estimate the number of years a person is expected to live in that health state or condition.

Multiply the quality of life score by the number of years to calculate the total QALYs gained.

Scottish burden of disease

In many ways this report is a response to the data published in the most recent Scottish Burden of Disease (SBOD) Study November 2022 [11]. The SBOD study was set up to monitor Scotland's population health, by measuring differences in harm from causes of disease, injury, and death across the entire life course.

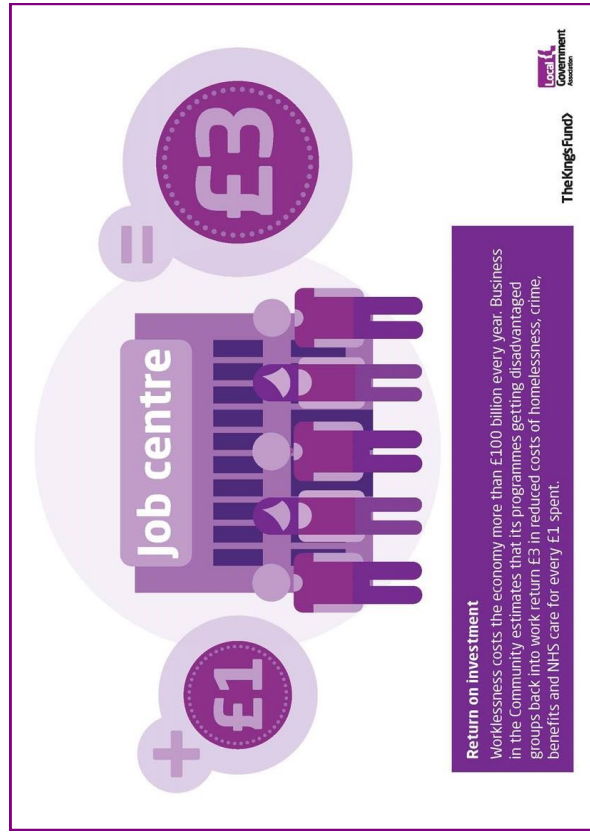
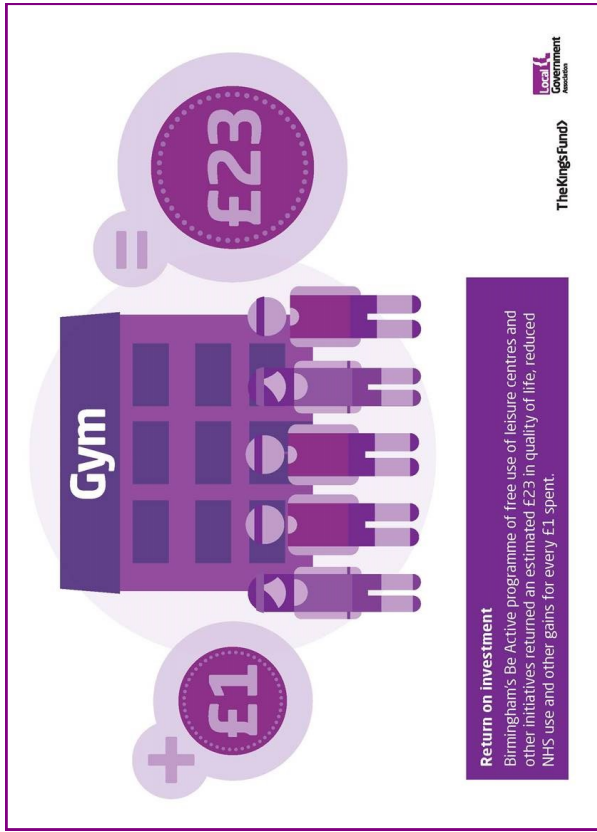
The report suggests that, despite an overall projected decline in the population in Scotland by 2043, disease burden could increase by over 20% with subsequent impact on the need for, and provision of, health and social care. This assumes no substantial change to current dietary, exercise and other lifestyle habits of the population. Leading causes are expected to continue to be cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and neurological diseases. A King's Fund publication has noted "huge sums will be wasted if high levels of preventable illness hit over the next two decades" [12].

Primary prevention first

Among the different methods of prevention, primary prevention appears to have the best outcomes and the better return on investment. Primary prevention can be described using the analogy of a river:

There is an oft quoted parable (a version of which was originally credited to the sociologist, Irving Zola [13] that tells of a man and woman fishing downstream. Suddenly a person comes down the river struggling for life. The fisherfolk pull her out. Then another comes and again must be rescued. This happens all afternoon and the fisherfolk are getting very tired from constantly pulling people from the river. Eventually they think, "We need to go upstream and find out why so many people are falling in the water". When they go upstream, they find that people are drawn to the edge to look at the river, but there is no safe way to do this. Many of them fall. The fisherfolk go to the community leaders and report the number of people who have fallen into the river. They also report that this is due to the lack of a protective barrier on the cliff. Community leaders build a wall behind which people may safely view the water. Some still fall, but there are many fewer victims to rescue. This is the "moving upstream" analogy for prevention. Instead of expending all resources and energy on rescuing people, why not stop the problem from even happening? This is not to say that the problem can be eliminated, but there may be fewer people to rescue downstream. The upstream analogy describes primary prevention - this key concept in our public health approach.

Preventive efforts are very cost-effective. Public Health Scotland have recently published on the public health approach to prevention [14], which highlights the benefits of primary prevention. In 2016/17, a typical one day stay in a hospital bed (in England) cost an average £586 [15]. Systematic review evidence has shown better return for investment for primary preventative measures (£34 for health protection such as immunisation programmes, and £46 for legislative interventions such as smoking ban, for every £1 invested). For secondary and tertiary prevention, the return is estimated at £5 for every £1 invested.



Given that primary and primordial preventative strategies are concerned with stopping people developing illness, they require input from across all elements of society: healthcare, local government, third sector, industry, the community, and individuals themselves. Collaborative working is the best way to address the social, cultural, economic, structural, environmental and commercial determinants (upstream factors) that lead to illness for those living in the Borders. [16].

Mobilising a preventative system across Scottish Borders

Our NHS and its support system is a dedicated and systematic approach to health care, based in evidence and leadership. We need to have a preventive system which operates in the same way that is just as strong: co-ordinated, evidence-driven and able to offer sustainable improvement to the health of the whole Scottish Borders population. We need to work together as individuals and as an organisation to effect change. A preventive system has been defined as the “people, processes, activities, settings and structures that can protect and promote and health of individuals and communities.” [17]

Prevention in healthcare

As already acknowledged, while the NHS carries out much established preventive work, in times of extremis, the acute pressures of the day can demand time and focus. Public Health wants to enhance and expand prevention activities in the NHS. We know our population’s health is in decline, as we grow older as a group. We need to step back, plan, and act now to prevent worsening of the NHS’s current situation. The best way to take the pressure off the hospitals is to ensure fewer people need to attend at all!

We can start with developing the role of NHS Borders as an Anchor Institution; establishing our role as a force for good through our actions in relation to our workforce, procurement, land and assets. NHS Borders currently employs 3496 staff (a whole time equivalent of 2783); when we focus on getting it right for our employees we are operating in a way that generates health for the people working in the NHS beyond the diagnostic and treatment services we provide. Each employee is part of a family unit, so the benefits and support we provide them has the potential to spread much more widely throughout our population.

Supporting clinicians to focus on prevention and population health can provide professional satisfaction and reduce frustration, and potentially burnout [18]. There can be a strong frustration when clinicians feel unable to address the underlying cause of many of the health problems they encounter among their patients; when they must “send them back to the conditions which made them sick” [19].

There are opportunities we can take to truly embed prevention in routine health delivery. We can identify chronic conditions early and maximise and support self-management through the inherent skills in prevention of our primary care colleagues. We can make sure our health service delivery does not further exacerbate the health inequalities that already exist (indeed, a national Public Health Action Team is focussed on actions to prevent this).

We can expand our social prescribing offer in the Borders to support people to self-manage and co-produce their own health. Social prescribing connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing. As defined by Public Health Scotland, social prescribing is “*commonly used in primary care settings and provides non-medical options for primary care staff to draw on to support their patients’ health and wellbeing, including their mental health. Social prescribing - is an approach used to support self-management.*”

It is primarily used for connecting people to non medical sources of support or resources within their community. It can also be used by professionals working in other services and enhances the holistic approaches to addressing health, wellbeing and mental health problems [20].

What is Social Prescribing?

According to the King's Fund: social prescribing, also sometimes known as community referral, is a means of enabling health professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. The referrals generally, but not exclusively, come from professionals working in primary care settings, for example, GPs or practice nurses.

Recognising that people's health and wellbeing are determined mostly by a range of social, economic and environmental factors, social prescribing seeks to address people's needs in a holistic way. It also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health [21].

Another way to think of this is that it represents primary prevention. If done in a systematic, evidence-based and connected way it has the potential to take out much demand for health and social care. Approximately 3,000 consultations per week in general practice are primarily for social reasons in the Scottish Borders.

Embedding prevention in the work that they do, often in difficult circumstances, is the only rational way to reduce future work pressures. These should be underpinned by ensuring staff understand the impact of health inequalities and stigma experienced by people and groups which lead to barriers to accessing services. As the Director of Public Health, I am happy to work with colleagues to discuss and develop these ideas further. Behaviour change is difficult, so the liberal use of dashboards and ranking tables will help keep the focus, but only on areas where objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound). Here are some of the measures I would recommend that our colleagues in NHS Borders undertake:

In settings such as the community (in people's own homes), for primary care and attendances at the Emergency Department:

- All activities should be designed to minimise health inequalities.
- Continue to identify people who will benefit from support of the NHS Borders Wellbeing Service.
- Encourage, promote and measure attendance at health promoting events, and collect information on the impact of those events on future behaviour & health.
- Implement ways of measuring social connectedness and encourage more connectivity as a way of building community networks that reduce isolation and improve skills/knowledge.
- Smoking cessation should be particularly targeted at those with most to gain (e.g. people with existing respiratory conditions such as bronchitis or asthma). We must support smokers to substitute less harmful activities at the very least and support them to quit where possible.
- Alcohol screening to identify people drinking outwith guidelines and support them to only drink alcohol within the low-risk guidance and consider trying low or no alcohol alternatives. We should promote zero-alcohol events.
- Promote drug avoidance and effective rapid treatment/resolution through collaboration with partners as well as improve messaging at target groups through social media.
- Implement a deprivation measurement/dashboard to see the impact on our population of our interventions.

- Self-care: improving physical resilience and balance across our population, especially older people e.g. Yoga/Tai Chi, Pilates.
- Self-care: encourage the appropriate use of services including NHS24 by promoting messages and working with groups connected by a common desire to promote health and wellbeing (social movement through a network of networks).
- Self-care: encourage walking and active travel using interventions that target people appropriate for their life stage.
- Ageing Well – anticipatory care planning for old age; promote power of attorney; develop support systems for minor illnesses by empowering self-help groups; and have in place rescue arrangements for collapse/falls before they are needed. These should be targeted to those most likely to need admission in the coming year (50% chance or more), and this should be assessed annually. It is important that we create space for people to plan ahead, and discuss what a good old age looks like, and what a good death might be. By planning for these eventualities, we can share and discuss difficult circumstances more openly. We encourage women to plan for a good birth, so it seems strange that we do not plan for other inevitable health challenges.
- Starting Well – promote breast-feeding, target smoking/drinking in pregnancy, improve uptake of vaccinations especially in areas/groups where uptake is poor, healthy weight should be promoted/supported through homes, nurseries and schools, identify those with delayed development and provide proportionately more services in these.
- Support the wellbeing of residents through mental health promotion activities.
- ALISS should be widely used in primary care.
- A Key Information Summary (KIS) can be created for each patient to extract information to be made available for other people and services looking after the patient and enables the creation of 'anticipatory care plan' which helps people and their carers plan ahead for any changes in their health needs KIS summaries, anticipatory care/ future care planning [22]
- We can medicalise normal wear-and-tear issues too readily. A social prescribing system is needed that connects and supports our citizens to de-medicalise many of the issues related to ageing. This needs to be a systematic arrangement and provide an evidence-based Social Wellness Service. Across the Scottish Borders there are already around 100 people working in the area, but are dispersed and not working to a common purpose or goal. Approximately 3,000 consultations per week in general practice and community care are primarily due to social reasons; some of these also attend the Emergency Department. A Social Wellness Service would give agency to people to manage many of their own problems and should be urgently implemented to help support the scarce resources in the NHS. Modelled on General Practice, it should be accessible to all, when needed, but with the aim of building capability and capacity to support self-care and enhanced problem solving.



What is ALISS?

ALISS, a local information system for Scotland, aims to make information about sources of support for health and wellbeing easy to discover. Its foundations lie in the lived experience of people trying to find local services, clubs, groups, and activities to help them live well [23].

ALISS enables people to work together to make information more widely available and easily findable through a variety of digital channels. ALISS is a coproduced, web-based system for finding and sharing information about community assets across Scotland.

For in-patient and out-patient services

- Stop Smoking – monitor all, and encourage harm minimisation by using alternatives such as nicotine replacement. A critical point of behaviour change is becoming a patient, and we should use Making Every Contact Count - an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day-to-day interactions that organisations and individuals have with other people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing [24]
- Embed routine enquiry about money worries and signpost to welfare and benefits advice (Money Worries App).
- Alcohol screening and brief intervention – record and review on a regular basis as this can be subject to change, and consider working with peer-led support.
- Everyone should be entitled to an annual medication review. Not all medications work as intended nor are taken in an effective manner due to side-effects.
- Support to reach target BMI (Body Mass Index). This might include dietary supplementation for those under or a peer-led programme of managing weight loss.
- Measure & protect ambulatory capacity when under treatment. At each important contact, capacity should be assessed to show where declines have occurred (and displayed graphically to help visualise the trajectory).
- Being in a bed should be a last resort; a dashboard of time spent in bed should be the normal way of surveillance in wards to encourage rapid mobilisation.
- Discharge planning needs to be measured in terms of effectiveness. Hospitals are a risky place for vulnerable people so in-patient time should always be minimised, recorded and reviewed. Lessons should be learnt and good practice disseminated.
- Future care planning for all.
- Strength and balance training – falls avoidance should be part of every routine contact.
- Promote power of attorney so everyone has had at least one recorded discussion at least every three years, and more frequently when needed. Broaching the subject by a healthcare professional is likely to be more acceptable than from a relative.
- Promote Value-Based Health and Care - a values-based conversation about future planning of health would use the acute reason for attendance, when appropriate, to have a wider discussion about self-care and keeping well. Each discharge should include an anticipatory care plan for the next decade. For older attendees, this might also include an opportunity to think about power of attorney and planning for a good old age.
- Patients often spend a long time waiting; can we not utilise this time to educate, inform and engage those people in improving their underlying well-being, when appropriate and safe to do so? Could we expand use of audio visual equipment in this regard?
- We operate a medical model, but often overlook the social functioning aspects of people's illness. We should routinely collect Patient Reported Outcome Measures [25] when providing or beginning treatment so we can assess how well we have done in restoring social functioning for our patients.

For our staff (and their families, when appropriate)

Consider having department/ward dashboards (aggregated/average figures):

- Vaccination coverage.
- Screening access.

Consider having ranking tables across organisational sub-units for:

- Steps/activity.
- Competitions that encourage team building. Have, at least annually, a wellbeing event for the service area/department.
- Routinely offer of referral to smoking cessation, healthy weight and emotional support resources/ Wellbeing Service. Recording of such data will help others coordinate efforts and pick up themes and trends when presented in aggregate.

- Raise awareness of sources of local support for those with concerns about the alcohol use of themselves or those close to them.
- Routinely enquire about money worries and signposting to welfare and benefits advice, as well as the Money Worries App.
- Build a safe space to discuss disability, gender and race and help staff self-identify and thus access support that is available.
- Use of standing desks for those seated most days, and allowing movement every hour, especially those working remotely, will generate the myokines that support muscle, bone and immune functioning. It may be helpful to set targets for steps per day at work, and monitor and report on them through regularly updated dashboards.

Prevention interventions in social and community care

- Isolation is particularly problematic and can be aggravated by loss of hearing and sight. Everyone should have these assessed at least annually, and any deterioration addressed proactively.
- Alcohol screening and brief interventions should be widely available and routinely assessed.
- Social functioning is a key driver for wellbeing, both physical and social. Interventions that encourage connecting with others (using communities of common interest) to address isolation will yield improved outcomes. Linking across generations is a valuable adjunct: young children respond well to older people and this is often reciprocated. Initiatives such as “adopt a grandparent” have evaluated well. The more diverse and richer the social environment is for a person, the greater is the resilience against future illness and need for admission.
- Ensuring food and drink available is in line with healthy eating guidance and avoids those with high fat, salt and/or sugar.

For social care

As employer/commissioner

- Proactively raise awareness of modifiable health risk factors and signpost staff providing care to sources of support and advice.
- Encourage increased physical activity whilst in work, and support/encourage such activities outside of work. Use of standing desks for those seated most days, and allowing movement every hour, especially those working remotely, will generate the myokines that support muscle, bone and immune functioning.
- Setup collaborative methods to encourage behaviours that encourage wellness; peer support works best to encourage and support long-term behaviour change.
- Develop an understanding and process for promoting good respiratory hygiene to prevent spreading colds and other infections.
- Develop a strategy for quickly identifying stress at work situations and managing issues such as carer responsibilities e.g. flexible working.

For the client group

- It is important to monitor trends; surveillance showing deterioration and thus opportunities to limit the harm before becoming a crisis, and indeed to reverse the trend are needed and charted. All carers should therefore have knowledge of and access to simple measures they can employ to address common issues; they should feel confident to work across boundaries to deliver patient-centred care.
- The carers and relatives of clients are an important source of support and advice. Have we adequate and routine measures in place to meet their wellbeing needs including their health-related behaviours? Are these collected and measured, and actions taken to pick up trends or gaps?

- Assess everyone with respect to harmful behaviours (smoking, alcohol consumption etc.), record and monitor with annual reviews. Have their biometrics on a dashboard that is shared with all carers will ensure collective ownership.
- Regularly assess balance, frailty, and vision/hearing. These change with time, and proactive assessment (at least annually) will pick up issues before they become disabling.
- Social functioning is a key driver for wellbeing, both physical and social. Interventions that encourage connecting with others (using communities of common interest) to address isolation will yield improved outcomes. Linking across generations is a valuable adjunct: young children respond well to older people, and this is often reciprocated. Initiatives such as “adopt a grandparent” have evaluated well. The more diverse and richer the social environment is for a person, the greater is the resilience against future illness and need for admission. Loneliness is a particular issue for individuals needing social support, and their often-limited mobility means specific interventions are needed for this set of groups.
- Whilst opportunities to encourage more physical activity can be scarce, even those with limited or no mobility can carry out specifically designed activities in a chair.

Partnerships and community development

Given that so many factors outside of the health service influence the health of Borderers, multiagency partnerships are essential to address the wider determinants of health. This was captured in a widely shared and supported model first espoused by Dahlgren & Whitehead in 1991 [26]. Public Health will need to strengthen our work with transport, housing, town planning, social services and food systems. We know how important our work with community third sector and advocacy groups is; these groups understand local need and experience so they can use community assets to make the most of health-benefitting opportunities. There are many excellent examples of community-based preventative work across the Scottish Borders described in this report.



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991)

We know that social prescribing is a whole population approach that works particularly well for people who:

- Have one or more long term conditions.
- Who need support with low level mental health issues.
- Who are lonely or isolated.
- Who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.

Social prescribing link workers also support existing community groups to be accessible and sustainable, and help people to start new groups, working collaboratively with all local partners. We are lucky to have a strong sense of community in the Scottish Borders, and a large cohort of our population are active and able older adults. One preventive approach to partnerships and community development will be to tap into the potential of the community in the Scottish Borders, working to develop sustainable new peer support.

Partner institutions

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is the lead place-maker locally and has a duty to promote wellbeing for residents. There is strong evidence that our health can be affected by both the working environment, our environment where we live as well as our genetics. Workplace interventions to improve health and wellbeing are applicable to all employers although it is recognised that in different industries and settings there may be unequal access to the following opportunities to prevent ill-health and improve the wellbeing of our employees. It is especially our anchor institutions that will drive and set the tone for others. The biggest anchor institutions here are NHS Borders (NHSB) and SBC but not exclusively so. I therefore suggest the following interventions for our anchor institutions as employers, to promote prevention, having previously described more specific interventions for NHSB.

Primary Prevention

- Access to well paid jobs.
- Flexible working opportunities.
- Train managers in supporting mental health and wellbeing including suicide prevention.
- Ensure employees are involved in decision making.
- Promote vaccination and screening programmes.
- Follow healthy eating principles for provision of food and drink.
- Encourage in work physical activity (e.g. walking meetings, taking proper breaks).
- Adopting smoke free grounds policies.
- High blood pressure is a stealthy, hidden cause for early death and disability. This is entirely preventable, but needs specific support to identify cases. The use of self-administered mechanisms has greatly improved access to information, and if this is supported by appropriate occupational health access, could generate longer and more fulfilled lives for those who would otherwise succumb unexpectedly from heart attacks or strokes.

Secondary Prevention

- Monitor sickness absence to understand causes and take action to reduce variation and the underlying causes.
- Implement supportive absence policies.
- Support access to health services such as stop smoking services.

Tertiary Prevention

- Access to occupational health and wellbeing services.
- Flexible working opportunities (including support for carers).



It is important to address the needs of children. They are our future and efforts at prevention and reducing health inequalities begin here. Therefore, any intervention needs to target children and their developmental needs. I am disappointed that I have not been as engaged as I would like to be with those who lead our education department. I look forward to doing so in the coming year. To encapsulate some of the many things I hope to collaborate with them on I make just a few key suggestions:

- Review/update substance use policy for schools to incorporate particularly regards vaping (covers alcohol, drugs and tobacco).
- Increase the uptake of school meals as evidence indicates that this improves educational attainment.
- Measure the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) of children in the transition from primary school to help tackle health inequalities early and prevent the lifelong harm that can result.
- Ensure compliance with the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) regulations in all education settings and endeavour to locally source as much food as possible. This can prevent oral health problems as well as promote healthy weight.

Borders College and other education institutions also play a role in improving the health of our residents, with most wishing to train to take up better employment opportunities. They may also wish to consider the following, and certainly to open a dialogue with public health to see where we can support and collaborate:

- Ensure staff understand the impact of health inequalities and stigma experienced by people and groups which lead to barriers to accessing services.
- Equip staff to discuss self-referral to Wellbeing Service to support healthy behaviours and emotional wellbeing.
- Ensuring food and drink available is in line with healthy eating guidance and avoids those which are high fat, salt and/or consumables, maximising locally produced foodstuffs.
- Consider alcohol free events and promotion of low/no alternatives.
- Promote physical activity, whether through set piece sports events or other social occasions.
- Promote and support breastfeeding.
- Consider allowing premises to be used as shared community spaces outside of standard operating times. If we want to create a health and promoting culture amongst our residents it would help if local groups can utilise some of the facilities to promote their activities.

The planning department of SBC has a significant role in place-making and controls access to harmful activities through its licensing functions. I would suggest the following interventions, which can be the basis of a future dialogue and collaborative work:

- Restrict advertising of products high in fat, sugar or salt by the local authority via transport networks, or third parties on council-owned assets and events.
- Use the licensing system to improve the local food environment.
- Robustly apply the Alcohol Licensing Objectives including protecting and improving public health and protecting children and young persons from harm.

The cultural and sports life of a community shapes many collective activities in any place. The importance of sport is that it encourages physical activity, but also brings people together, even those who would not otherwise engage in competitive physical activities. Cultural events and dances can help bring entire families together. The prime agent that delivers these for residents is Live Borders. This has faced some challenging times, and its scope to deliver additional work may be significantly reduced. However, I would welcome an opportunity to engage with Live Borders to:



- Help them participate in and contribute to social prescribing through the integrated Social Wellness Service.
- Use community spaces and events to host health promoting activities. For example, in other areas, libraries have hosted immunisation sessions. Community spaces have been utilised for community groups, but I would like to turn these groups into agencies that also promote wellbeing and good health so we can build a social network of networks that become the constituent parts of social movement for health.
- Ensure staff understand the impact of health inequalities and stigma experienced by people and groups which lead to barriers to accessing services.
- Use a data driven approach to prioritise increasing physical activity in those who are least active.
- Ensuring food and drink available is in line with healthy eating guidance and avoids those with high fat, salt and/or sugar.



All of us need a shelter, and for most of us this is the home we live in. These homes are an important component of place-making, and the policy set by SBC is a key driver to encourage provision of safe and health promoting homes. We know that many of our homes are old and are difficult to heat. We know that people can be lonely and isolated in their homes due to disability and illness but also due to the distributed nature of our population and the varying challenges in using public transport. I look forward to continuing our dialogue with the housing policy unit. However, we have over 12,000 households that rent from

the registered social landlord (RSL) sector. These agencies expend much effort in ensuring that tenants, especially those in need, are supported. I therefore make the following suggestions by way of commencing a dialogue with this area:

- Ensure staff understand the impact of health inequalities and stigma experienced by people and groups which lead to barriers to accessing services.
- Equip staff to discuss self-referral to Wellbeing Service to support healthy behaviours and emotional wellbeing. We should work together to create smoke-free homes, and work to ensure that houses meet the Scottish Housing Quality standard.
- Ensuring food and drink available is in line with healthy eating guidance and avoids those which are high fat, salt and/or consumables.
- RSLs should take a census of all their residents, not merely their tenants, so we have a more complete understanding of the group that they look after. Sharing this information may help the health and social care system provide more targeted and pre-empt potential admissions with early intervention. Working with GP colleagues may help us develop a system of early warning: some GP colleagues have claimed that they can predict homelessness two or three years in advance of it taking place.
- RSLs should look to collaborate with the potential Social Wellness Service, as social prescribing will help build greater resilience amongst their tenants.
- RSLs should look, in their role as employers, how they can meet the suggestions previously made for their staff and I look forward to supporting them to operate as Anchor Institutions.

Private businesses are a key driver for the economic wellbeing of our communities. We recognise the challenge for private business currently and that smaller businesses have issues of scale when adopting the recommendations for employers. The pandemic, the changes brought about by EU Exit, and then the cost of living crisis have all had an impact on the profitability of this sector. Small businesses, in particular, can feel isolated and unsupported.

- There has been an increase in the proportion of food consumed out of the home in Scotland and in 2021 the average was three out of home trips per week, mostly from fish and chip shops and other takeaways. It is often the case that out of home food comes in larger portions compared within the home. The sector can help by reducing the portion size of unhealthy options and making it easier to choose healthier options through, for example, using lower calorie versions of usual ingredients [27]. This is particularly of importance in supplying food to children.
- Promoting and supporting breastfeeding whenever possible.
- Making lavatories available for our ageing population (Just Can't Wait scheme).
- Participating in wellbeing activities when held locally.
- High nicotine content and single-use vaping products have been shown to be particularly addictive and problematic. The sector should pre-emptively try to reduce their commercial reliance on these types of products – working as a whole system would mean no-one would lose out by not stocking such items.
- Make sure every employee carries out sufficient physical exercise to maintain their health and wellbeing. There is good evidence that 10,000 steps a day is a target to aim for to maintain both physical and mental health, accepting that those who stand all day, are getting their allocation without walking.
- Consider promoting the Money Worries App to help support staff who may be struggling with finance, due to the cost of living crisis.
- There is no wealth without health, as identified by the City of London Corporation. We are happy to work collaboratively with business partners to tackle the commercial determinants of health [28] and therefore also prevention activities that concern our entire population.

Communications and community engagement

Strong effective communication involves a clear dialogue with the public. Our prevention agenda in Public Health is clearly aligned with the recent “Time for Change” community engagement work on-going across the Borders.

Time for Change advises people can take action to support their own health by:

- Getting vaccinated
- Use NHS Inform for advice
- Future care plans for the frail
- Connect with others socially
- Participate in Waiting Well
- Move more

And these actions will be supported by the following initiatives currently being carried out by NHS Borders:

- Value based health & care
- Pharmacy first
- Right place, right care
- Oral health care strategy
- Patient initiated review
- Waiting well
- Social prescribing

We when work together to use evidence-based dissemination strategies we can communicate clear risk-factor based advice to the right people, in a way that is clear and easy to understand. We can have a conversation between the NHS and our service users as equals and partners to discuss what matters most to the individuals in our population and how we can best support people to stay well. We can also work with our partners in the Integrated Joint Board and Community Planning partnership to participate in their initiatives, and help develop the ones that will support our THIS Borders strategy. We want to work more closely with the other anchor institutes to help promote wellbeing and health through better prevention.

ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) is a free, national digital programme that enables people and professionals to find and share information on organisations, services, groups, resources and support in their local communities and online. Anyone can use it to find information about activities such as support groups, fitness classes and social clubs. ALISS also includes information about health and social care services. We are working with senior colleagues to ensure that ALISS is our 'go to' resource for people in Borders to know what is available in their area.

Evaluation and monitoring

High-quality evaluation is an essential part of preventive programmes and their implementation. If we can increase our evaluation in Borders of our local initiatives across defined settings then we can inform opportunities for scaling up at a national level. This is going to be most impactful if we can include health economic evaluation of our initiatives, and there is a backdrop of easily accessible and transparent sharing of best practice across Scotland.

We are currently working on developing data indicators for wider social and environmental determinants of health that we can consistently report on across our Health and Social Care Partnership. Using the Scottish Indicators of Multiple Deprivation index has limitations when applied to our rural population in the Borders. When we have reliable data for priority populations locally, we can better measure differences in health and wellbeing outcomes. This is essential for when we come to decide what to invest, and importantly what to disinvest in, in the longer term.

Environment: flooding and climate adaptations

The climate crisis is a health crisis. Work is on-going across NHS Borders to share environmental sustainability between portfolios and work across sectors to develop a Climate Adaptations plan led by Facilities. We are working with national colleagues at Public Health Scotland to share and understand best practice in this area. Of particular concern to Borders are the risks of flooding and the impact on the food system when many of our population are involved in agriculture for their employment. We need to act now to prevent and mitigate the impact on the physical health, mental health and employment opportunities of Borderers.

Local activity

Our Joint Health Improvement Team's (JHIT) Annual Report is presented to reflect each of Scotland's six Public Health Priorities and aims to share highlights or insights into the work of our skilled and experienced team members. The overall aim of JHIT is to reduce inequalities in health by promoting good health throughout the life stages: building capacity and capability within our communities and workforce and creating a healthier future for all.

The Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) is a partnership of agencies and services responsible for reducing the harms associated with alcohol and drug use. This year's ADP annual report focuses on the key outcomes we want to deliver, and summarises the data from last year's activity.

The Joint Health Protection Plan (JHPP) with Scottish Borders Council describes our health protection community activity and details our action plan. The health protection function across the South East of Scotland has undergone major changes in the last six months, and continues to protect the public from communicable disease and environmental hazards working as one regional team during the day-time and with local cover at night and weekends.

The NHS Public Health Annual Screening Report for 2020-23 details the delivery and uptake for the six screening programmes. It has been a challenging time for screening with the impact of the global pandemic and a high degree of national activity including the development of new standards for the bowel screening programme, and an on-going audit into cervical screening.

As with many other aspects of health, the most important factors for maintaining good oral health sit outwith healthcare or dental services. Recognising that for some people their life circumstances can place them at increased risk of poor oral health, NHS Borders have an active Oral Health Improvement Team who work closely with various partners and agencies to help create environments which support oral health. In response to an oral health needs assessment undertaken in 2018, a Strategic Plan for Oral Health and Dental Services is in advanced stages of development and will be implemented from April 2024.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This is an important time for public health in Borders and in Scotland; we are now living post-COVID and well into the 'recovery phase'. Public Health Priorities are not just for public health departments to deliver; we need work closely together to tackle the fundamental causes of health inequalities. Our partnerships with others and developing ideas about how we work with local communities will shape our public health efforts going into 2024 and beyond.

Recommendations

1. We need a **strong leadership focus on Prevention**, and this needs to be connected to mainstream work within the NHS Board. An indicative ring-fenced budget, no matter how small in the early years, will galvanise interest and action, and could act as a catalyst for change. Working collaboratively with SBC may open up opportunities for change and improvement for future years. All this could be overseen by a dedicated Board or Committee which we need to consider would give this work the heft and importance it needs and deserves.
2. We need to work collaboratively with our **Anchor institutions** and get **Health in All Policies** clearly established. Public health advice on health matters is a necessity for those whose business is not health, but even there, prevention is not something that can be carried out without planning and consideration for consequences. Most of the activities we carry out as service providers have an impact on health and wellbeing. It would be risky, if not dangerous, if we carried out complex interventions such as surgery without appropriate support and oversight by skilled surgeons. It is therefore also true for activities that impact on health and wellbeing of the whole population and groups within them. The Public Health Department is keen to engage and help support change, using evidence-based approaches.
3. We have clearly identified that the health and social care system is under increasing demand. The demographics of our population is that which Scotland will experience in 2054. We are therefore living in Scotland's future. **It is imperative that as people age, they age well**, and are equipped to deal with minor ailments. Social Prescribing and working closer with primary care is the route to more self-management and to decrease demand for healthcare. A more profound conversation about the safety of healthcare is also needed, as small dispersed services provided by a few experts is not sustainable. The size and scale of our healthcare infrastructure needs to change to diminish the harms that people are suffering due to the myriad ways complex healthcare can let people down. Smaller services have less resilience overall and as the quantum of care is less, experts can become deskilled in rarer diseases and interventions.
4. We need to back a solution for **social prescribing at scale**. We need a service that can provide for the needs and demands of around 3,000 consultations per week. Many of these may well be from a smaller cohort of people in need making multiple contacts. Until we have a cohesive way to support these individuals which diverts them away from healthcare, our system will continue to struggle. A Social Wellness service is the obvious solution which links together elements of Live Borders, the NHS Wellbeing Service, What Matters Hubs, Local Area Co-ordinators and also the disparate components within RSLs that support people to manage at home. By working together in a seamless way and across all our towns and communities, working with the faith sector, community groups and third sector colleagues through Borders Community Action, we can begin to tackle the issues of seeking medical solutions for social problems. This will take time, which is why action to make this happen needs to be expedited.

All these actions will be supported by the THIS Borders Strategy which will be coming to the Board shortly. This is a way to embed health inequality reduction in everything that we do. This needs to be sustainable and carried out at scale, which is why it is emerging from cross-agency discussions.

Public Health Activity in Scottish Borders 2023

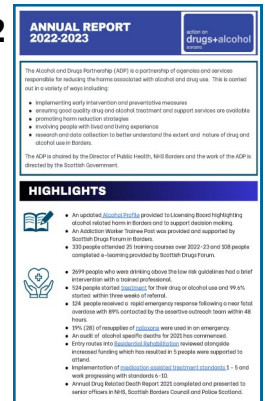
JHIT Annual Report

Attachment 1



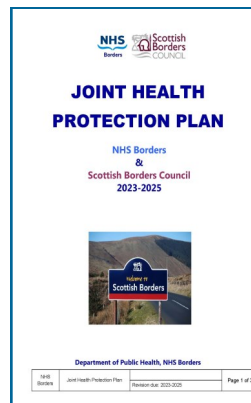
ADP Highlight Annual Report

Attachment 2



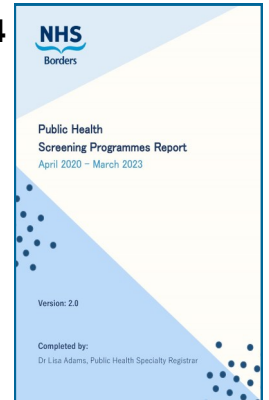
Joint Health Protection Plan

Attachment 3



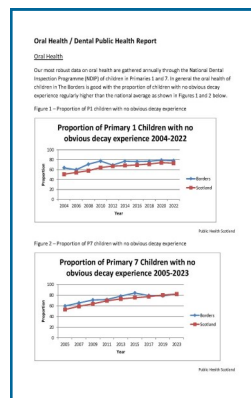
Screening Programmes Report

Attachment 4



Oral Health Report

Attachment 5




REFERENCES

1.	https://publichealthscotland.scot/services/discovery/overview/what-data-is-available-on-discovery/
2.	https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/avoidable-mortality/2020/avoidable-mortality-20-report.pdf
3.	Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
4.	https://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1538/health-inequalities-policy-review-march-2014-english.pdf
5.	https://www.gov.scot/publications/realistic-medicine-doing-right-thing-cmo-annual-report-2022-2023/
6.	https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/online-version/
7.	https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report.pdf
8.	https://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1089/economics-of-prevention-mar16.pdf
9.	https://www.york.ac.uk/media/che/documents/papers/researchpapers/CHERP166_Impact_Public_Health_Mortality_Morbidity.pdf
10.	https://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1089/economics-of-prevention-mar16.pdf
11.	Scottish Burden of Disease Forecasting Briefing (scotpho.org.uk)
12.	Prevention Rather Than Cure The King's Fund (kingsfund.org.uk)
13.	https://iaphs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/IAPHS-McKinlay-Article.pdf
14.	https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/17437/public-health-approach-to-prevention-and-the-role-of-nhsscotland.pdf
15.	Modelling the annual NHS costs and outcomes attributable to healthcare-associated infections in England BMJ Open
16.	making-case-public-health-interventions-sep-2014.pptx (live.com)
17.	https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030
18.	A new approach to primary care for Australia Centre for... (cpd.org.au)
19.	The health gap: the challenge of an unequal world - The Lancet
20.	https://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/social-prescribing-resources
21.	What is social prescribing? The King's Fund (kingsfund.org.uk)
22.	https://services.nhslothian.scot/anticipatorycareplanning/gp-practice-teams/
23.	https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/digital/aliss-a-local-information-system-for-scotland-2/
24.	MECC Implementation guide (publishing.service.gov.uk)
25.	https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g7818
26.	Göran, Dahlgren, and Margaret Whitehead. "Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health." (1991) - <i>citation only</i>
27.	https://www.obesityactionsotland.org/media/1rfhqj35/local_levers_for_diet_and_healthy_weight_final.pdf
28.	https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)00590-1/fulltext

Need to contact us

public.health@borders.scot.nhs.uk @

Public Health, NHS Borders, Education Centre, 
Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS

01896 825560 

Report by Director of Finance & Procurement

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

21 February 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the freezing of Council Tax at current 2023/24 levels for 2024/25. The paper provides background information to the Council Tax as well as confirmation of the charge from April 2024 in all Council Tax bands.**
- 1.2 Council, in setting the indicative budget for 2024/25 in February 2023, forecast that Council Tax would rise by 4 per cent from 1 April 2024 providing an additional £2.9m income, net of discounts and exemptions and excluding growth of £0.6m from growth in properties, to fund Council services.
- 1.3 In October 2023, the First Minister announced the Scottish Government's intention to deliver a Council Tax freeze across Scotland for 2024/25 in recognition of the impact of the current cost of living crisis on households. There was a commitment for this freeze to be fully funded. As part of the December 2023 Scottish Government budget, funding of £144m was provided which Scottish Government have stated equates to an equivalent 5% increase in Council Tax nationally. The distribution methodology of the £144m was confirmed in January 2024 and Scottish Borders Council will receive an additional £3.2m to support the freeze, this is £0.3m more than the £2.9m approved within the financial plan which supports the current funding gap. The £0.6m assumed for new properties remains in the budget.
- 1.4 All council tax values referred to in this paper refer only to the Council Tax element of the charge on households. They exclude charges collected by SBC on behalf of Scottish Water through council tax bills. An increase of 8.8% in domestic water and sewerage charges levied by Scottish Water is due to take place from 1st April 2024.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Council is recommended to

- a) **Accept the additional funding of £3.22m through the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement to freeze Council Tax at 2023/24 levels; and,**
- b) **Approve the Council Taxes to be paid in financial year 2024/25, from 1st April 2024 in respect of all chargeable dwellings in the Scottish Borders as set out in the table below, with a Band D equivalent of £1,356.11.**

Scottish Borders Council Tax applicable Charges from 1st April 2024:

Council Tax Band	Applicable Annual Charge Per property £
A	904.07
B	1,054.75
C	1,205.43
D	1,356.11
E	1,781.78
F	2,203.68
G	2,655.72
H	3,322.47

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Council Tax funds around 20% of local government net revenue expenditure in the Scottish Borders, the remainder coming from Government in the form of direct revenue support grant. The Council Tax in the Scottish Borders is the 5th lowest in mainland Scotland and 7th lowest overall once the island Councils are included. Council Tax is a tax on domestic property. All domestic properties are banded based on their valuation at the 1991 levels, any new properties are also assessed on estimated values from 1991 and allocated to one of the 8 property bandings (A-H). The property bandings and the numbers of properties in each band for the Scottish Borders are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Band	Property Value 1991	No of Properties at Dec 2023	Existing Multiplier	Proportion of Band D	Current Council tax £
A	Up to £27k	16,567	0.66667	240/360	904.07
B	£27k - £35k	12,860	0.77778	280/360	1,054.75
C	£35k - £45k	7,360	0.88889	320/360	1,205.43
D	£45k - £58K	6,309	1.00000	360/360	1,356.11
E	£58k - £80k	6,630	1.31389	473/360	1,781.78
F	£80k - 106k	5,083	1.62500	585/360	2,203.68
G	£106k -£212k	4,720	1.95833	705/360	2,655.72
H	Above £212k	495	2.45000	882/360	3,322.47

3.2 Band D is the average rate of Council Tax. The band D tax for the current financial year 2023/24 is £1,356.11 per annum in the Scottish Borders. All other bands vary as a proportion of the band D rate. The relationship between bandings does not vary year to year unless the “multiplier” i.e. the relationship between band D (the average) and the other bands is varied by Scottish Ministers.

3.3 The majority of properties in the Scottish Borders fall into bands A – C which contain 36,787 (61.3%) out of the total 60,024 domestic properties per a snapshot of the valuation roll at December 2023.

3.4 Council Tax bands are also used to set domestic water and sewerage charges which the Council bills and collects on behalf of Scottish Water. **All figures in this paper refer only to the Council Tax element of the charge and exclude any reference to charges collected by SBC on behalf of Scottish Water. An increase of 8.8% in domestic water and sewerage charges levied by Scottish Water is due to take place from 1st April.**

3.5 Scottish Government have previously announced their intention to reform Council Tax and held a ‘Fairer Council Tax Consultation’ in Summer 2023.

4 COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

- 4.1 Council, in setting the indicative budget for 2024/25 in February 2023, forecast that Council Tax would rise by 4 per cent from 1 April 2024 providing an additional £2.9m income, net of discounts and exemptions, to fund Council services. An additional £0.6m for a forecast increased number of properties was also included in the forecast.
- 4.2 In October 2023, the First Minister announced the Scottish Government's intention to deliver a Council Tax freeze across Scotland for 2024/25 in recognition of the impact of the current cost of living crisis on households. There was a commitment for this freeze to be fully funded. As part of the December 2023 Scottish Government budget, funding of £144m was provided which Scottish Government have stated equates to an equivalent 5% increase in Council Tax nationally. It was confirmed in January 2024 that Scottish Borders Council would receive an additional £3.2m to support the freeze, this is £0.3m more than the £2.9m approved within the financial plan which supports the current funding gap. The £0.6m for the estimated increased number of properties has not been impacted.
- 4.3 The following table shows the current 2023/24 charge per band which it is recommended will be frozen for financial year 2024/25.

Table 2

Band	Council Tax rate per band (current 2023/24 rate frozen for 2024/25)
A	904.07
B	1,054.75
C	1,205.43
D	1,356.11
E	1,781.78
F	2,203.68
G	2,655.72
H	3,322.47

- 4.4 Proposals of the indicative Council tax rates for 2025/26 to 2028/29 will form part of the budget papers submitted to Council on 29th February 2024.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no further costs associated with the content of this paper, its content relating to a decision to freeze Council Tax levels at current 2023/24 rates for 2024/25.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The normal arrangements for protecting those on low incomes through an extensive scheme of discounts and exemptions as part of the Council Tax reduction scheme would be unaffected. The effect of this change on the relative position of Scottish Borders in the council tax league table is not yet known pending decisions by other local authorities.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

There are no adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the contents of this report.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There are no significant effects on the economy, community or environment.

5.5 Climate Change

No effect on carbon emissions is anticipated.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This section should only be completed if this is a new or amended policy or strategy.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

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

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change) and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name

Suzy Douglas

Title

Director of Finance & Procurement

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Lizzie Turner	Chief Officer, Finance & Procurement

Background Papers:**Previous Minute Reference:**

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

Contact us at Lizzie.turner@scotborders.gov.uk Ext 6056



SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

21 February 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with a final working draft of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy.
- 1.2 The first Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan included a commitment to “Develop a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Destination and Marketing Strategy” 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 a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland.
- 1.4 The report 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 the Council:

- (a) Endorses the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy, and;**
- (b) Recognises 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

- 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.
- 3.2 The creation of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy 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. The strategy has been written based on consultation with;
 - Strategy Advisory Group
 - South of Scotland Destination Alliance Board
 - 14 local area meetings – led by SSDA
 - 13 thematic / sectoral meetings – led by SSDA
 - Online survey
 - Visitor feedback – VisitScotland social listening tool
 - 1 to 1 digital meetings with stakeholders
 - South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership
- 3.5 From the 14 local area meetings, 3500 data contributions were made to the development of the strategy with strong feedback that the process has been inclusive, transparent, and fair and that consultation participants feel their views are represented. This work has contributed to the creation of a strategy document and associated draft implementation plan which will be launched at the South of Scotland Destination Alliance Conference on the 20th March 2024. This strategy translates the National Shared Vision, Outlook 2030 for the needs and opportunities of the South of Scotland, recognising that the visitor economy is a huge area of opportunity for the South and the Scottish Borders.
- 3.6 Council is asked to endorse the final working draft Responsible Tourism Strategy (Appendix 1) before its official launch next month.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract visitors and increase market value. An implementation plan is currently being developed to ensure strategic outcomes are delivered and details of this, highlighting specific financial implications, will be reported to Members as details become available.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) Tourism is a priority for Scottish Borders Council and a South of Scotland wide strategy 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.
- b) 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 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 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 have been consulted on this report. Comments received have been incorporated into the final version of the report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig **Director of Resilient Communities**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Emily MacLeod	Economic Development Officer (Tourism)
Jane Warcup	Principal Officer – Economic Development
Graeme Johnstone	Place and Enterprise Manager – Economic Development
Sam Smith	Chief Officer – Economic Development

Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Economic Development Update, 11 January 2024

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

Contact us at: Emily.Macleod@scotborders.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Scotland Starts Here: a Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland

DRAFT v3.3: 14th February 2024
Informed by feedback from the Regional Economic Partnership

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) We will **Inspire visitors** to come to the South of Scotland by: 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) We will **Develop the visitor experience with a focus on quality** by: 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) We will **Support business to succeed** by: 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) We will **Act responsibly for long-term collective benefit** by: 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 a rolling three-year Implementation Plan which tracks in detail exactly what actions each organisation is responsible for, over the coming three 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.

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.

DRAFT

Introduction

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 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 South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), the Borderlands 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.

Our Visitor Economy:

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.

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 Coronavirus 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 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.

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.

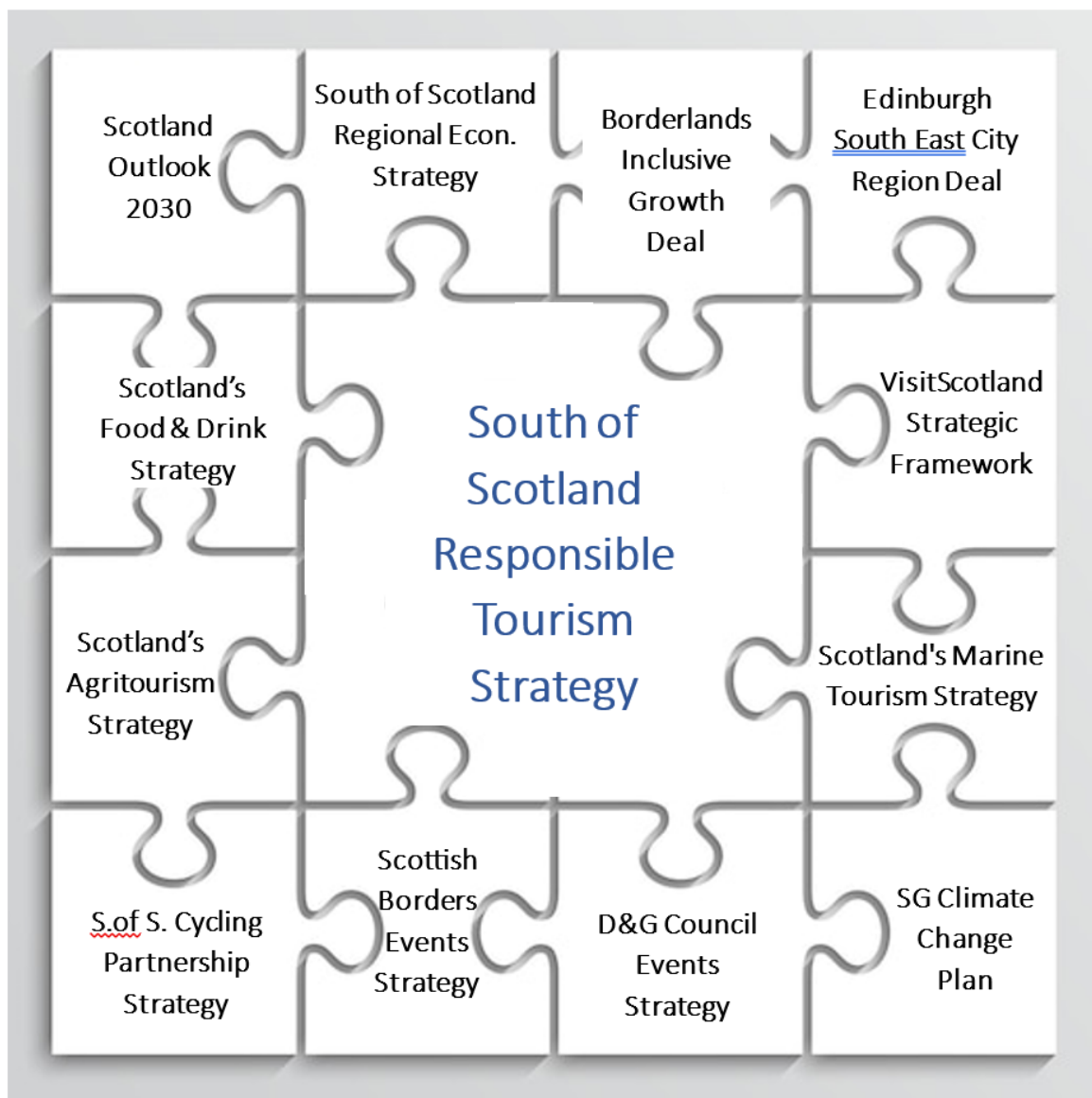
Responsible tourism:

- 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:

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.



Our Ambition for Growth:

Through this Responsible Tourism Strategy, we will 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 three 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' 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 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 and instead. 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 build our voice and 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:

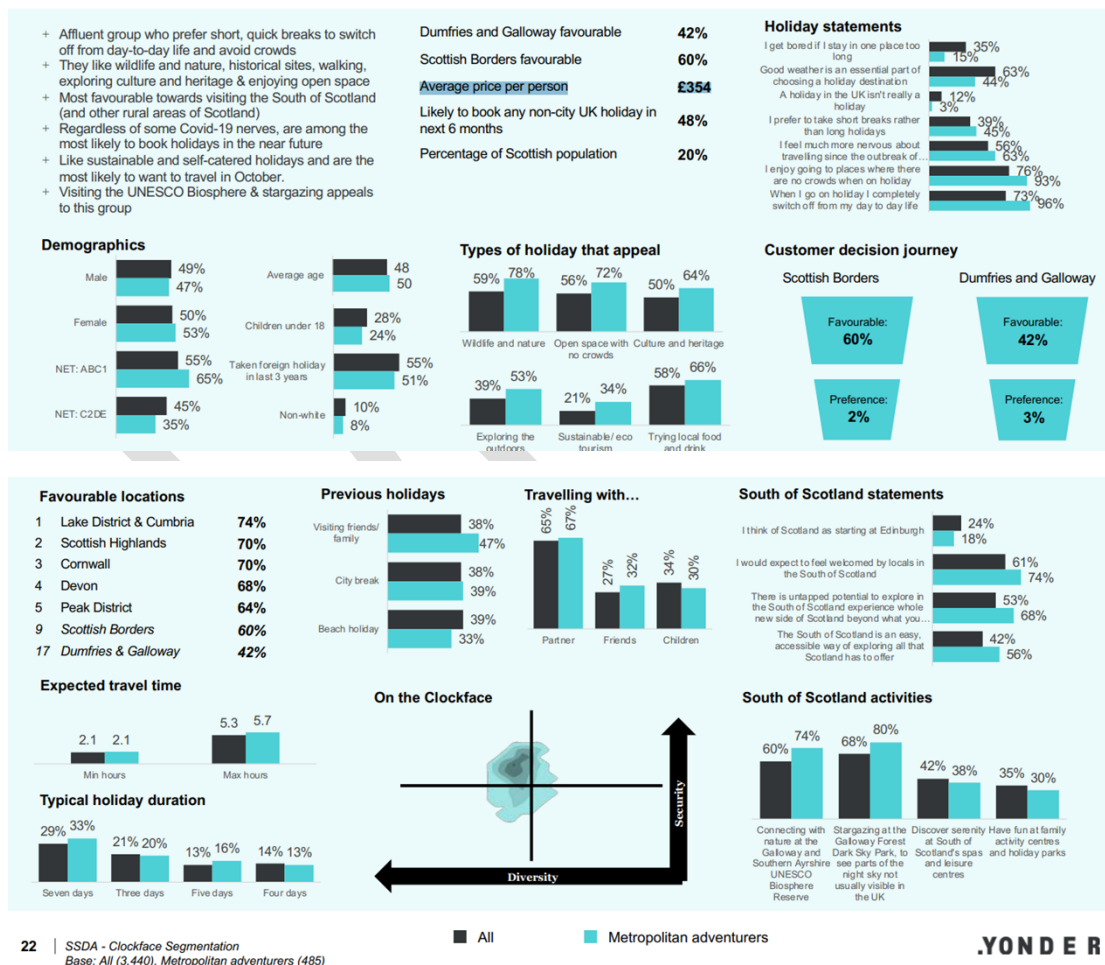
In an increasingly dynamic global market, in which new trends and visitor flows are fast emerging, it is important this ten-year strategy does not prescribe too rigidly our target markets for the South of Scotland to 2034. Rather, we must be alert to the changing landscape, actively seeking market insights; 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, visiting historical sites, food and drink, local arts, crafts and culture, and exploring galleries and museums¹.

Metropolitan adventurers: 14% of the UK population



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

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'.

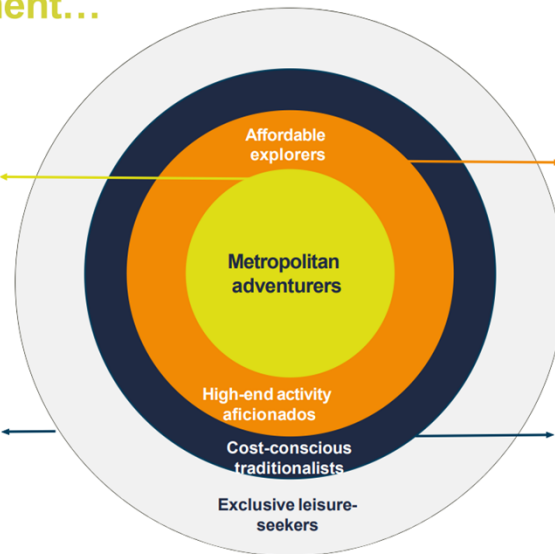
The right segment...

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:

- Covid-wary, avoiding crowds
- 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)

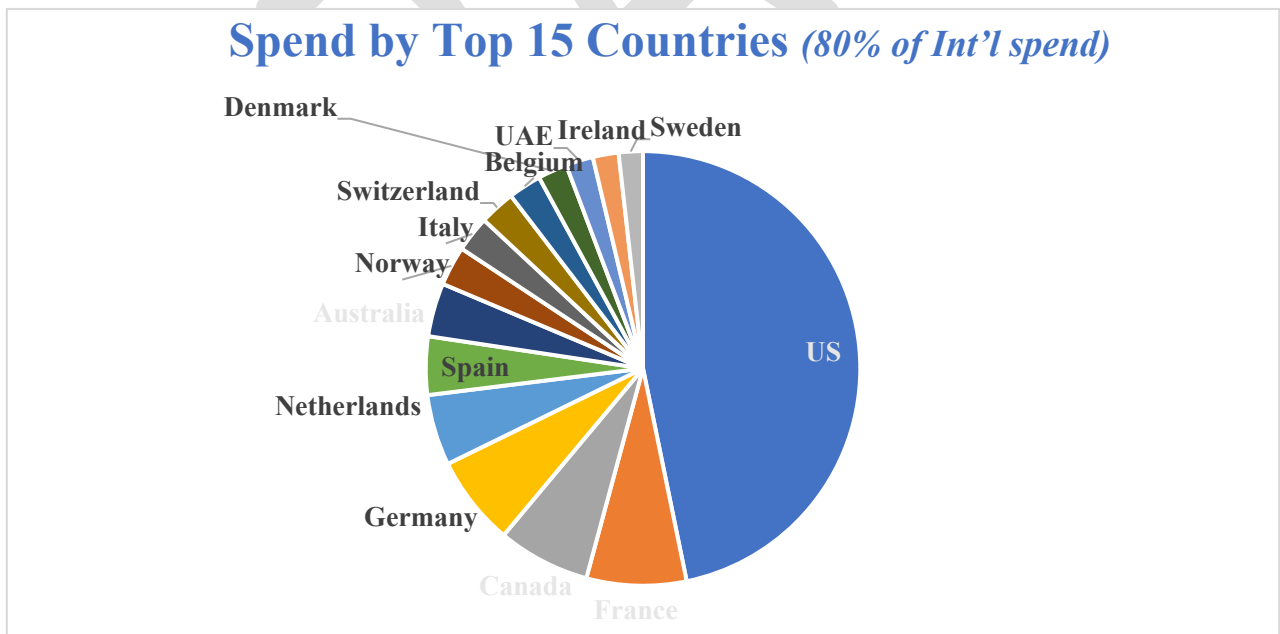
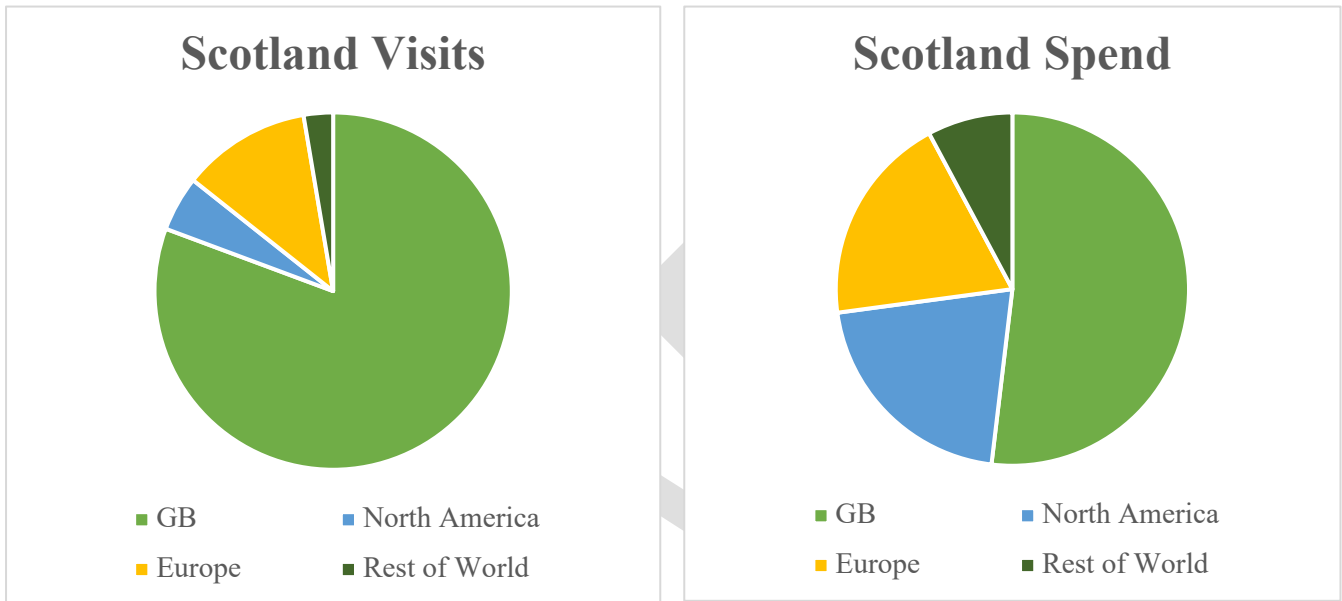
5.7	Metropolitan adventurers 5.8M 'considerers' worth £2.1 billion 3.5M 'existing' worth £1.3 billion	CORE AUDIENCE
6	Affordable explorers 3.7M 'considerers' worth £1.3 billion 2.4M 'existing' worth £915 million	
5.2	High-end activity aficionados 6.0M 'considerers' worth £2.4 billion 4.0M 'existing'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

As illustrated below, 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.



Source: GBTS 2022, IPS 2022

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.

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 rolling three-year Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan goes through in detail exactly what actions each organisation is responsible for, over the coming three years, to deliver each component of the strategy. It 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: South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), South of Scotland Destination Alliance (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 7 Stanes, 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.

DRAFT

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.

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 will do this by:

- Bringing the 'Scotland Starts Here' destination brand alive to reflect our culture, history, heritage, people and natural environment
- 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 standard 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

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 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

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

DRAFT

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 our quality offer to our target markets

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.

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:

- Better utilisation of the information and booking needs of visitors and employing technology to improve our response to those needs.
- 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.
- Integrate 'Scotland Starts Here' with 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 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 learning from the recent hosting of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in the region, with a view to hosting similar events of scale.
- Developing and supporting events to provide opportunities for attendees to dwell longer or stay overnight.
- 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:

- 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, 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 trunk road network, 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, A697 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 Glentworth 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, considered by the Convention of the South of Scotland in its work, and with partner and national public agencies.
- Identifying locations where the provision of toilet facilities and bins can be improved and work with partners and communities to find locally-appropriate solutions.
- 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.

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 Roxburghe 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 opportunity and 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.

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.

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 councils, SOSE and VisitScotland, to share views heard from businesses and communities.
- Having the SSDA and VisitScotland actively represented on the Regional Economic Partnership.
- Annually reporting back on the views and priorities communicated by business and communities, and what action has been taken.

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:

- Listening to the needs of our industry and representing them effectively in policy decision-making.
- 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.

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. 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.

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 collaboratively with regional partners to deliver the Natural Capital aspirations of the Regional Economic Partnership and the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme**
- 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 tourism
- Measuring customer perception of access and seeking feedback on improvements to target future spend appropriately
- Securing permanent funding to resource officers to work with funding bodies and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund
- Working with communities and partner agencies to actively monitor the environmental impact of visitors in key areas **and adjust practises as required.**

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 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 hotels 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.

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 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 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:

- Creating a region-wide campervan experience through the development of a campervan policy framework that covers expectations of campervan 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 the local authorities and the private sector for which motorhome users should be expected to pay appropriate charges
- Actively manage our motorhome offering to maximise spend in region.



LIVE BORDERS – PLANNED TEMPORARY CLOSURES OF FACILITIES

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

21 February 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Council on the temporary closures which are required to some of the Live Borders operated sporting facilities to ensure necessary electrical inspections/works are undertaken and proposes that, given buildings are closed, further survey and scoping work is undertaken, subject to available resources.**
- 1.2 A joint programme of actions was approved by Council at its meeting of 23 November 2023, including undertaking condition surveys of SBC buildings managed by Live Borders.
- 1.3 Electrical compliance-related works are planned by Live Borders in a number of buildings which will require their temporary closure for short durations.
- 1.4 Works to upgrade the heating system at Eyemouth Leisure Centre is ongoing and the facility remains closed during this period.
- 1.5 It is proposed that these temporary closures are utilised to allow some further scoping works to be undertaken. This adopts the same principles used following the Peebles Swimming Pool fire whereby additional fabric improvement works were delivered at the same time.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Council agrees:-**
 - (a) the proposal, subject to available resources, to take the opportunity of temporary closures to carry out condition surveys, and a scoping exercise which will identify further works required to the Eyemouth and Hawick facilities from simple interventions to full decarbonisation; and**

- (b) to delegate authority to the Chief Executives of both organisations in consultation with the elected members of the SBC/Live Borders Executive Board to extend these closures, if required, to facilitate additional works, subject to available funding.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Council approved a joint programme of actions on 23 November 2023 following the presentation and analysis of a detailed review by specialist consultants, Alan Jones & Associates.
- 3.2 This agreed programme included the commission of condition surveys of all Live Borders' managed buildings to determine their current status and also the level of investment that might be required.
- 3.3 Approval was granted separately for planned plant, mechanical and refurbishment works at Eyemouth Leisure Centre which was being delivered with support from Scottish Borders Council. This work commenced in November 2023 and was due to complete by February 2024, but has had to be extended due to a number of unforeseen issues within the building, resulting in an extended period of closure.
- 3.4 A new interim Chief Executive of Live Borders was appointed at the beginning of 2024 and he has implemented a review of property compliance matters, including statutory electrical inspections. These can be complex pieces of work, especially in public buildings, and the decision has been taken to close these temporarily to allow the works to be executed safely and efficiently.
- 3.5 The facilities which will be affected in February and March are:
- Kelso Swimming Pool - 5-day partial closure (4th to 8th March), open late afternoon into evening.
 - Gytes Leisure Centre (Peebles) - 5-day partial closure (19th to 23rd February), open late afternoon into evening.
 - Tweedbank Bowling Centre/Tweedbank Sports Centre – 2.5-day partial closure for bowling centre, 2.5-day partial closure for sports centre (week commencing 11th March). Both open late afternoon into evening.
 - Teviotdale Leisure Centre (Hawick) - will be closed for approximately one month (4th to 29th March) to allow essential works to be undertaken following a previous inspection undertaken in 2023.

4 SCOPING EXERCISE

- 4.1 The current works at Eyemouth were instructed jointly by SBC and Live Borders at relatively short notice in order to address the immediate technical issue related to the heating and ventilation system in the building, but without considering wider opportunities for the facility.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the continued closure of the centre be used as an opportunity to undertake a scoping exercise to determine whether additional works could be undertaken within the building. This exercise would consider simple interventions through to full decarbonisation of the building.
- 4.3 This piece of work will allow a greater understanding of the works that may be required in this specific building, but also offer an insight into the potential scale of the challenge – both physical and financial - across the wider SBC estate operated by Live Borders. (65 buildings).

- 4.4 It is anticipated that external consultant support will be required to augment SBC and Live Borders resources.
- 4.5 Subject to initial findings, this may result in a proposal to extend the temporary closure of Eyemouth Leisure Centre to permit additional works to be carried out.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that condition surveys of the other temporarily closed buildings (as noted in 3.5 above) be carried out simultaneously, where possible, and that consideration be given to a second scoping exercise at the Teviotdale Leisure Centre.
- 4.7 Given the evolving nature of the inspection and scoping works, it is proposed that any discussions to extend closures to allow further works to be carried out are delegated to the respective Chief Executives of both Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders in consultation with the elected members on the SBC/Live Borders Executive Board which are Councillor Jardine, Councillor Rowley, Councillor Pirone and Councillor Thornton-Nicol.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

- (a) There will be financial costs associated with professional fees for the scoping works. These have not yet been obtained, but it is anticipated that the Eyemouth Leisure Centre assessment may cost up to £10,000.
- (b) Anticipated costs for subsequently identified works cannot be determined in advance; however, it is proposed that budget provision to support these works be considered as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) Eyemouth Leisure Centre could reopen on completion of the current works without undertaking this exercise; however, failing to capitalise on this opportunity could mean that future minor works may require a further closure. The new Air Handling Unit (AHU), once commissioned to specification, is estimated to be capable of delivering circa 20% energy usage savings per annum. A consultant has been engaged to advise on the required steps to maximise the efficiency of the new AHU (including any works required to deliver this).
- (b) An early assessment, followed by further fabric modifications at this time, will contribute to decarbonising the building and to reducing on-going revenue costs.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

- (a) The temporary closure of facilities will have an adverse impact on service users within local communities. However, all possible steps have been taken by Live Borders to minimise this impact where possible.

- (b) In addition to the impact on local residents, prolonged closure of Eyemouth Leisure Centre will have a detrimental impact on the local economy. Caravan park bookings also include use of the Eyemouth swimming pool (as per the contract between Live Borders and Haven). Longridge Towers School also has a long-standing arrangement with Live Borders for exclusive use of the swimming pool in Eyemouth for half a day each Friday during term time.
- (c) Both the Gytes Leisure Centre (Peebles) and Kelso Swimming Pool will be temporarily closed for a short 5-day period each but will open as normal from 4.00pm each day of closure. All Live Borders members will still be able to access all other Live Borders swimming pools, gyms or fitness classes at any of their other locations.
- (d) Teviotdale Leisure Centre (Hawick) will be closed over a longer, almost 4-week period; with all memberships payments frozen over this period, and with members still able to access all our swimming pools, gyms or fitness classes at any of our other locations.
- (e) The re-opening of facilities following works will re-instate all facilities within their local communities.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

The scoping works identified within this report will allow the continued support of UN SD Goal 3 ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all ages.

5.5 **Climate Change**

The scoping works identified within this report may support Climate Change Implications by identifying works that will contribute to SBC and Live Borders' decarbonisation programme. None of the references in this report has a detrimental impact on climate change.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not affect or amend rural proofing policies.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

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

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

There are no changes to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals within this report.

6 **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change) and Corporate Communications are being consulted and Council will be updated on any further comments received at the meeting.

Approved by

Name Jenni Craig

Title Director Resilient Communities

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Ray Cherry	Chief Officer Estates x5187

Background Papers: Council – 23 November 2023

Previous Minute Reference: none

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

Contact us at Ray Cherry – rcherry@scotborders.gov.uk

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank