
SCOTTISH BORDERS CYCLE TOURISM STRATEGY – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

7 June 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report seeks approval for a consultation exercise for the Draft Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy 2016-2021.**
- 1.2 The Scottish Borders has a long-established and substantial leisure cycling offer as well as world-class mountain biking. It has been agreed that a strategy for cycle tourism in the Scottish Borders should be developed to provide a strategic framework for the development of cycling in the area.
- 1.3 The Draft Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy is set out in Appendix 1. It details the product strengths, the challenges and the ambitions of using cycling as a means to deliver economic benefit for the Scottish Borders economy. It also highlights key issues that need to be addressed to achieve that.
- 1.4 This document will be used as the focus for a consultation exercise ensuring that all relevant partners, stakeholders and interested groups are fully involved in finalising the strategy. An Action Plan will also be produced as part of the consultation process.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) **Notes the Draft Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy 2016-2021 set out in Appendix 1;**
 - (b) **Agrees that a consultation exercise built around the Draft Strategy should be undertaken over the Summer period; and**
 - (c) **Asks the Corporate Transformation and Services Director to present a report to the Committee following completion of the consultation process.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Borders has a long-established and substantial leisure cycling offer as well as world-class mountain biking at the 7stanes sites at Glentress, Innerleithen and Newcastleton. It also has an attractive series of natural trails on the hills. The natural assets of the area provide a wonderful cycling playground and a range of cycle friendly services. Unlike other activities, cycling is available throughout the Scottish Borders offering a good opportunity for geographic spread.
- 3.2 Following the development of the 7stanes mountain biking centres and a concerted effort to promote leisure cycling from 2009 via the Scottish Borders Recreational Cycling Group (SBR CG), cycling has become a key tourism product for the Scottish Borders. This period of activity coincided with a growth in the number of cycling and mountain biking events with TweedLove, the Tour de Lauder, the Tour o' the Borders and the Enduro World Series, all helping to promote the Scottish Borders and raise its profile as a cycling destination.
- 3.3 Activity to date has mostly relied on funding from EU funding sources such as LEADER, or as support activity around the regular hosting of the Tour of Britain. This has resulted in irregular bursts of activity and momentum. As part of the LEADER-funded projects by the SBR CG a website was developed under the Cycle Scottish Borders banner.
- 3.4 On the completion of the second LEADER project a report concluded that in future both leisure cycling and mountain biking should be promoted together, i.e. in an 'all wheels' project. This idea has not been progressed due to funding constraints. There is now a need to consider the current position and look again at the opportunities to use cycle tourism as a means to increase economic benefit to the Scottish Borders.

4 DRAFT CYCLING TOURISM STRATEGY

- 4.1 There is currently a marked increase in public interest in cycling tourism within the UK, especially following the success of the 2012 Olympics, Tour De France Yorkshire Grand Depart and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. There is also a significant increase in primetime TV coverage of cycling events, as the market has developed.
- 4.2 The Scottish Borders has good coverage of national cycling routes and excellent circular, forest, town and off-road routes so it is well placed to take advantage of the cycling tourism opportunity. There is also a unique 'cycling' orientated population shift with a large number of active riders, children and athletes in development. National cycling statistics currently demonstrate 43% of the population owns or has access to a bicycle. The National Travel Survey also notes that around 8% of the population (3 million people) cycle 3 times a week or more; and in total 34% of the population (20 million people) say they cycle once a year or more.
- 4.3 Scottish Borders Council has supported a project to ensure cycling events received support in order to grow and develop in a cohesive and sustainable way. This has enabled the events sector to continue to thrive and promote the Scottish Borders as a cycling 'destination' in the broadest sense. Building on this, the Council Administration's manifesto, Ambitious for the Borders, sets out an ambition to make the Scottish Borders one of Britain's premier destinations for outdoor activities, both sporting and leisure. There is a particular focus on cycling and walking.

- 4.4 Council officers have identified that there is a continued requirement for investment into cycling product development in all areas. In order to ensure this is addressed in a strategic and coordinated way, there is now a requirement for a Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy. It is intended that this strategy will encompass event development, infrastructure and marketing to maximise cycling events and tourism opportunities.
- 4.5 A Draft Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy for the period 2016 to 2021 is set out in Appendix 1. The Draft Strategy has been developed as a strong starting point for a consultation exercise with wider stakeholders and interest groups. It is intended that the strategy reflects the business opportunities around cycling, as well as providing a focus for planning new cycling infrastructure and building on the strong events offer that currently exists.
- 4.6 The overall aim is for the Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy to boost the Scottish Borders economy and accelerate the growth of cycling both from an events and tourism perspective by encouraging and working across a broad remit. The Scottish Borders is already a leading destination for cycling in the UK and by 2021 the aim will be to achieve world class bike destination status.
- 4.7 The consultation exercise will be undertaken over the summer period. It will involve workshops and discussions with tourism businesses, communities and interested groups, such as cycling clubs, and Community Planning Partners such as VisitScotland and Forestry Commission Scotland. The team will also draw on the expertise and experience of Cycling Scotland and the Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland Project, which is based at Glentress. It is expected that a detailed Action Plan will be also be prepared through the information and input gathered during the consultation.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial costs as a result of the recommendations of this report as existing staff time and project budgets will be used to undertake the consultation. A key part of the consultation exercise will be to discuss and identify how additional resources can be drawn into the area to support the development of cycle tourism. This resource discussion will be linked to the development of a detailed Action Plan.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not support businesses and communities to take advantage of the opportunities provided by cycle tourism. The development of a Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism strategy that has input from a wide range of stakeholders will mitigate this risk.

5.3 Equalities

It is anticipated there are no adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious/belief arising from this report.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

The encouragement of cycle tourism will help support economic activity across the Scottish Borders, bringing in new and repeat visitors to the area and raising the profile of the Scottish Borders at a national and international level. There are also opportunities to link cycle tourism to the Borders Railway and the Core Path Network.

5.5 Carbon Management

Increasing the volume of visitors who are using bicycles for transport and recreation could reduce the need for travel and have a positive impact on carbon emissions.

5.6 Rural Proofing

The Draft Cycle Tourism Strategy will require to be rural proofed before it is finally approved later in the year. The Strategy could have a positive impact for rural areas of the Scottish Borders as many of the best road and mountain biking routes are in the remoter parts of the Scottish Borders.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments incorporated into the report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson
Corporate Transformation
and Services Director

Signature

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Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

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