
SCOTTISH BORDERS CYCLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1 November 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates members on the consultation process and seeks approval for the Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy 2016-2021.**
- 1.2 The Scottish Borders has a long-established and substantial road 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 overall aim for the Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy is to boost the Scottish Borders economy and accelerate the growth of cycling from an events and tourism perspective. The Scottish Borders is already a recognised destination for cycling in the UK and the aim will be to be seen as one of Britain's premier destinations for cycling by 2021.
- 1.4 Following a consultation exercise, which invited responses from relevant partners, stakeholders and interested groups, the draft strategy has been updated and an action plan produced. The Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy 2016-2021 is set out in Annex 1.
- 1.5 Scottish Borders Council has supported the cycling sector to continue to thrive and grow, promoting the Scottish Borders as a cycling 'destination'. 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. The Cycle Tourism Strategy and action plan will help support the sector to move forward to realise this ambition.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) Approves the Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy 2016-2021 as set out in Annex 1;**
 - (b) Approves the Action Plan for 2017 / 2018, as set out in Annex 2, and notes the actions that are already resourced and those for which resources are still to be identified; and**
 - (c) Supports the decision to move the Tour o' the Borders closed road cycle event to 3 September 2017, and agrees to continue supporting and encouraging this cycle event, and others, as part of the Cycle Tourism Strategy.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Borders has a long-established and substantial road 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 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 road cycling from 2009 via the Scottish Borders Recreational Cycling Group (SBRCG), 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 including TweedLove, the Tour de Lauder, the Tour o' the Borders and the Enduro World Series. These events all help to promote the Scottish Borders and raise its profile as a cycling destination.
- 3.3 There is now a need to consider the current position and look at the opportunities to use cycle tourism as a means to increase economic benefit to the Scottish Borders.

4 CYCLE TOURISM STRATEGY

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 the cycling and tourism spectrum. The Scottish Borders is already a recognised destination for cycling in the UK and the aim is to be seen as one of Britain's premier destinations for cycling by 2021. The strategy that has been developed encompasses event development, infrastructure and marketing to maximise cycling events and tourism opportunities.
- 4.3 The draft Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy was presented to the Executive Committee in June 2016. The consultation period over the summer involved online consultation as well as specific workshop sessions. A range of relevant partners, stakeholders and interested groups were invited to respond and over 70 written responses were received.
- 4.4 The comments were positive and constructive and endorsed many areas within the draft strategy. Broadly, it was felt that the strategy reflected the business opportunities around cycling for the Scottish Borders, as well as providing a focus for planning new cycling infrastructure and building on the strong events offer that currently exists. The feedback assisted in identifying priorities within the action plan.
- 4.5 Following the consultation period, the Strategy for the period 2016 to 2021 has been reviewed and the following vision proposed:

We will work to make the Scottish Borders one of Britain's premier destinations for cycling by 2021.

The Council will seek to deliver this vision by working across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

- 4.6 The aim is to prioritise aspects of cycle tourism by capitalising on the Scottish Borders' unique selling points to increase awareness and, through the creation of new packages, deliver strong economic impact. The following key objectives are highlighted:
1. Developing our Assets – turning our cycle tourism assets into experiences and improving quality.
 2. Event Development – attracting and leveraging events
 3. Building consumer demand – promoting the quality experiences
- The finalised Strategy is set out in Annex 1 with an Action Plan specifically for 2017/2018 set out in Annex 2.
- 4.7 The Tour o' the Borders closed-road cycling event is an excellent example of the type of event that can help to raise the profile of cycling in the Scottish Borders. In 2016 it attracted over 2000 riders to come to the area to experience the fantastic cycling on offer on Borders roads. In discussion with officers, Hillside Outside, the event organisers, has confirmed that the race will shift to a new date for next year, 3 September 2017. This is later than previous years and will now avoid the school holidays. It also puts the event into the 'shoulder' months, which helps support a longer season for tourism businesses. Officers agreed that the new date was helpful in supporting the tourism sector and also helped meet the concerns raised by a number of communities. An in-depth process of community engagement has begun already, with the organisers taking a stand at the Yarrow Show in September 2016.
- 4.8 Scottish Borders Council has supported the cycling sector to continue to thrive and grow, promoting the Scottish Borders as a cycling 'destination'. 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. The Cycle Tourism Strategy and action plan will help support the sector to move forwards to realise this ambition.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The Cycle Tourism Strategy initially has an action plan specifically for 2017/2018 to help support the sector to move forward. The Council has identified existing budget of £57,000 from Economic Development, which can be targeted to support cycling events activity. There are two key areas which have been identified as areas of opportunity and which require further development. These include additional marketing and infrastructure development and a further £58,000 will require to be identified from Council and partner sources if the actions are to be delivered. At this stage in the financial planning for 2017/18 it is helpful to identify priorities in this way.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a risk if the Council does not support businesses and communities to take advantage of the opportunities provided by cycle tourism that the economic development opportunities from this growing sector may not be maximised. The Cycle Tourism Strategy has a detailed Action Plan with specific resources to deliver key priorities activities. Working in partnership with local agencies and businesses will be critical to the successful delivery of the Action Plan.

5.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken to identify any potential positive or adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious/belief arising from the Cycle Tourism Strategy.

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 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 have been 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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