
HAWICK ACTION PLAN – UPDATE

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

30 MARCH 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a progress report on key activities within the Hawick Action Plan following previous updates in November 2016 and an update in a private report in March 2017. The report also highlights the opportunity to present some of these potential project opportunities as economic development priorities for the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise and Skills Vehicle.**
- 1.2 The Hawick Action Plan is structured around three key themes which were identified and agreed by the key stakeholders for the town. The themes are making Hawick a 'Great Place for Working and Investing'; a 'Great Place for Living and Learning'; and a 'Great Destination to Visit'.
- 1.3 Since November 2016 there has been significant progress within some of the themes, in particular 'Creating an Environment to Encourage Economic Growth'. The priority actions identified and areas of progress are set out in Appendix 1. A number of key areas of progress are highlighted within this report.
- 1.4 Two major projects to note include the Business Growth / Property Development proposal with an application for Scottish Government funding; and the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme. The Business Growth / Property Development Proposal is aimed at helping to deliver a variety of business infrastructure projects to help drive the local economy and to encourage business growth and new investment in the town. The proposal also includes a second phase, which will commission and deliver feasibility studies on individual sites. It is proposed that these sites are presented as priorities for the new South of Scotland Enterprise and Skills Vehicle.
- 1.5 The Hawick Flood Protection Scheme will now progress to a formal consultation period for the outline design. The project is currently scheduled to have final approval of the design in September 2017 with potential site completion in March 2022. The Flood Protection Scheme will enable further regeneration and development opportunities for the town by safeguarding areas of land currently deemed at risk to flooding.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council:

- (a) Notes the progress taking forward key actions within the Hawick Action Plan since November 2016, as set out in Appendix 1;**
- (b) Agrees that the Council should support further work with businesses and stakeholders in Hawick in 2017/18 as outlined in Appendix 1;**
- (c) Asks the Corporate Transformation and Services Director to present a further progress report on the Action Plan to the Council before the end of 2017.**

3 HAWICK ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The Hawick Action Plan is structured around three key themes which were identified and agreed by key stakeholders. The themes are:

Theme 1: 'Great Place for Working and Investing'

- 1.1 Make Hawick a 'Connected Place' ready to do business in the modern economy.
- 1.2 Create an Environment to Encourage Economic Growth
- 1.3 Create an Innovative Flood Protection Scheme

Theme 2: 'Great Place for Living & Learning'

- 2.1 Provide a suitable environment to retain school leavers and to attract new workers into the area.

Theme 3: 'Great Destination to Visit'

- 3.1 Make Hawick a great place to visit and stay

- 3.2 The Initial Hawick Action Plan was approved by Council in June 2016. Since then Council officers have been working to take forward the actions in the Plan in conjunction with other key stakeholders, local businesses and other local organisations in Hawick.

4 PROGRESSING THE ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 An update of the Action Plan was provided to Council in November 2016 with a further update in a private report in March 2017. There has been significant progress within some of the themes, in particular 'Creating an Environment to Encourage Economic Growth'. The priority actions identified and areas of progress are set out in Appendix 1. The key areas of progress are highlighted below.
- 4.2 **Business Growth / Property Development Proposal** - The Council agreed to submit formal proposals to the Scottish Government for the allocation of £3.625million for Hawick on 2 March 2017. The proposal for the Scottish Government funding is aimed at helping to deliver a variety of business infrastructure projects to help drive the local economy and to encourage business growth and new investment in the town. It is anticipated these projects will provide new job opportunities to benefit the local community as well as act as a catalyst for further potential property development in the future.
- 4.3 The proposal is split into two phases. The first phase focused on specific property development of sites in the town. The sites were prioritised for the Scottish Government funding due to their capacity to provide a range of modern attractive business space and the potential to provide a strong economic impact with additional job opportunities. These sites were also deliverable within the timescales required; and the overall capital works were in line with the funding available from the Scottish Government. The specific sites are not detailed in this report as the Council is currently in negotiation with property owners in regard to acquisition.
- 4.4 Acknowledging the importance of other key sites in the town centre, the Business Growth / Property Development proposal also includes a second phase. The purpose of the second phase is to commission and deliver feasibility studies on individual sites. It is proposed that these sites are

presented as priorities for the new South of Scotland Enterprise and Skills Vehicle.

- 4.5 **Hawick Flood Protection Scheme** – The Scheme will now progress to a formal consultation period for the outline design. Final approval of the design is scheduled for September 2017 with potential site completion in March 2022. The estimated overall costs of the Scheme continues to be refined as the detailed design develops. The Flood Protection Scheme will enable further regeneration and development opportunities for the town by safeguarding areas of land currently deemed at risk to flooding.
- 4.6 **Business Gateway Relocation** – The Business Gateway service will move to Tower Mill in Hawick and provide business support services from the 1 April 2017. The move will provide a high street location for the Business Gateway service for the first time. It makes it easier for people to drop in to see business advisors and will generate increased footfall in Hawick town centre.
- 4.7 **Mobile Phone Coverage** - Two planning applications have been submitted by EE to improve mobile phone coverage in two remote rural locations in and around Hawick. The first location is beside Wisp Flex Farm near Hawick. The second application relates to land west of Overshank Farm Cottage at Newcastleton.
- 4.8 **Digital Boost** - The Scottish Government has provided additional funds to continue the successful Digital Boost programme for a further year. The majority of the Digital Boost workshops will be run from Business Gateway's new base at Tower Mill in Hawick.
- 4.9 **Hawick Town Centre Marketing Pilot** - Following the Ryden's Gap Analysis report in September 2016, the Council has commissioned property marketing consultants to undertake a small scale marketing exercise to contact some of the key target retail and leisure operators as a pilot approach.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications with this report. However, the development of key activities within the overall Action Plan will require potential further financial commitment from the Council and other partners. This will be dealt with in future reports, as appropriate.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Council has been taking a proactive approach towards progressing the Hawick Action Plan, in conjunction with stakeholders and local partners. The development of the business growth/ property development activity and corresponding funding application to Scottish Government has been a significant positive step forward. The Council will continue to work with stakeholders, partners, local businesses and the community, to engage in appropriate projects and provide positive support for the Hawick Action Plan.

5.3 Equalities

It is anticipated that an Equalities Impact Assessment would be required in relation to the individual projects as they are developed in order to ensure that there are no adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age,

sexual orientation or religious/belief arising.

5.4 **Acting Sustainably**

The Hawick Action Plan aims to make the economy of the town more sustainable by improving, its connectivity, its business infrastructure, the level of local skills and the tourism offering. If the Action Plan helps to secure additional economic activity and growth it will have contributed to the improved sustainability of the local economy and community.

5.5 **Carbon Management**

Some of the actions contained in the Hawick Action Plan could have a positive impact on carbon emissions, particularly those actions noted above that lead to the development or redevelopment of ageing or vacant industrial properties.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

The Hawick Action Plan focuses on the town of Hawick but it is acknowledged that some of the actions, especially relating to digital connectivity, could have a positive impact on the surrounding rural areas.

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

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 2 March 2016

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

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