
HAWICK ACTION PLAN – UPDATE

Report by Executive Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5 DECEMBER 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report provides a progress report on key activities within the Hawick Action Plan following the last update in March 2017.**
- 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 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 Some of the key areas of progress to note include the Hawick Business Growth project with £3.625million of Scottish Government funding; Relocation of Business Gateway to Tower Mill, Hawick; the completion of Hawick Town Centre Marketing Pilot; the Borders Railway Extension Feasibility Scoping Study report being progressed; progress on the design and consultation of Hawick Flood Protection Scheme; Tourism Marketing activity including completion of a signage audit and commissioning of a marketing company to progress delivery of the marketing action plan; and initial feasibility study research commissioned for a 'Townscape Heritage' programme.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that Executive:**
 - (a) **Notes the progress made in taking forward key actions within the Hawick Action Plan since March 2017, as set out in Appendix 1;**
 - (b) **Agrees that the Executive should support further work with businesses and stakeholders in Hawick in 2018/19 as outlined in Appendix 1;**
 - (c) **Agrees that the feasibility studies previously identified for two former textiles mill sites are now targeted at alternative priority buildings, and delegates authority to the Executive Director to agree these alternative buildings in consultation with the Executive Member for Business & Economic Development and the local Elected Members; and**

- (d) Asks the Executive Director to present a further progress report on the Action Plan to Committee by the end of March 2018.**

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:
- a) Theme 1: 'Great Place for Working and Investing'
 - Make Hawick a 'Connected Place' ready to do business in the modern economy.
 - Create an Environment to Encourage Economic Growth
 - Create an Innovative Flood Protection Scheme
 - b) Theme 2: 'Great Place for Living & Learning'
 - Provide a suitable environment to retain school leavers and to attract new workers into the area.
 - c) Theme 3: 'Great Destination to Visit'
 - 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 The last update of the Action Plan was provided to Council 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 **Hawick Business Growth Project:** The Council secured £3.625million from the Scottish Government in March 2017 for the development of three key strategic sites in the town. 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 Project is split into two phases. The first phase focused on specific property development of sites in the town.
- Former Armstrong's Building** – Since the last update, the Council has acquired the site and will demolish elements which are beyond repair and redevelop it as a business incubator hub providing small office units. The development is anticipated to provide up to 17 business incubator units, over 600m² net business space and potentially up to 25 FTE additional jobs. Business Gateway has also commissioned work to be done on modelling an incubation programme for the Scottish Borders, with the Hawick facility as one of the key sites.
- Galalaw Business Park** – Initially developed in 1994/95 as key employment land, a new phase of the development is now being progressed. A building of 456m² will be developed to provide up to 4 industrial units. This could potentially provide up to 10 FTE jobs. Work has now started on site for this development.

- Tower Mill, Heart of Hawick** - The top two floors of Tower Mill are currently business accommodation but have a low occupancy level. Minor alterations are proposed together with a proactive marketing campaign to attract new tenants. The proposal would make available up to 11 business units; equating to 485m² of total business space. It is estimated this could support up to 20 FTE additional jobs. In addition, the Business Gateway service relocated to Tower Mill in Hawick on 1 April 2017 to provide business support services from the property.
- 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 key strategic redundant sites. It is proposed that these sites are also presented as priorities for the new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. The sites that had been previously identified as priorities have now been bought by new owners so it is proposed that alternative priority sites and buildings are identified in consultation with the Executive Member for Business & Economic Development and the local Elected Members in Hawick.
- 4.5 **Hawick Town Centre Marketing Pilot** - Following 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. Feedback from the pilot was completed in November 2017 and the next steps are being considered.
- 4.6 **Borders Railway Extension Feasibility Scoping Study** -Transport Scotland are leading the Borders Corridors Study which includes the potential for an extended rail link towards Hawick and beyond. The study is aiming for completion in early 2018. The study is classed as a pre-feasibility study which focuses principally on data collection.
- 4.7 **Hawick Flood Protection Scheme** – Following approval of the outline design of the flood protection scheme earlier this year, a series of public meetings and site tours progressed during August 2017. A number of objections were noted and will be considered as part of the overall final design. The completion of the project, currently scheduled for March 2022, will enable further regeneration and development opportunities for the town.
- 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 **Tourism Marketing & Signage** - The Council has now engaged the marketing company that delivered the initial marketing action plan (BrightLight Marketing) to carry out the next stage of the project. Future Hawick will act as the main point of contact for this work. The Council's Tourism Officer has undertaken an audit of signage and identified the opportunity for a number of additional signs, improvements to existing signage and also rationalisation of some signage. Proposed works will be costed and appropriate funding sources identified.

- 4.10 **'Townscape Heritage' programme** - The potential has been identified to progress a possible Hawick 'Townscape Heritage' programme for the town centre focusing on a 5 year programme to "Redefine & Reinvigorate Hawick High Street". There is potential funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland. The Council has commissioned initial research to scope out the key parameters and opportunities for a proposal. This short piece of research was completed at the end of November 2017.

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 will 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. The Action Plan will help to secure additional economic activity and growth to improve the 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 Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report.

Approved by

**Rob Dickson
Executive Director**

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Bryan McGrath	Chief Officer Economic Development, Chief Executives – Tel 01835 826525

Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 30 March 2017

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Contact us at Bryan McGrath, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA Tel: 01835 826525, email bmcgrath@scotborders.gov.uk