
BORDERLANDS INCLUSIVE GROWTH DEAL – DESTINATION TWEED

Report by Executive Director
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

17 March 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the one of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal projects, the Destination Tweed Project, and outlines the support required for the delivery of the development phase of the project.**
- 1.2 The Council received an update report on the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Heads of Terms agreement at its meeting on 19 December 2019. One of the key projects in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal for the Scottish Borders is the Destination Tweed project.
- 1.3 The Destination Tweed project will celebrate the Tweed from source to sea, building an identity beyond its 100-mile length and creating a unique and world-class visitor destination that will connect and promote multiple assets and be known as one of the great long distance routes in the UK.
- 1.4 The partners currently have a funding application with the National Lottery Heritage Fund that will help build up the overall funding package for this ambitious project. It is important that the Council demonstrates its commitment to this project by supporting the development phase costs of the project. Officers have identified funding from current and future budgets that will address the £174,500 contribution required from the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that Executive Committee:-**
- (a) Notes the progress being made in developing the Destination Tweed project and the associated submission of a project funding application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF); and**
 - (b) Agrees to support the development phase of the Destination Tweed project by providing £174,500 over financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, as set out in section 6.1.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 One of the key strands of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal is 'Destination Borderlands'. The Destination theme has been formed around one key tourism project in each Council area. In the Scottish Borders, that tourism project is 'Destination Tweed', a project that builds on the River Tweed as a key tourism asset for the whole area.
- 3.2 Council officers have been working with Tweed Forum to develop the Destination Tweed proposals over the past 18 months. These discussions have been constructive, with strong support for the initiative. The outline proposal derived from early discussions in the area that highlighted the River Tweed as an internationally recognised name. This project builds on that recognition to use it to promote the area as a visitor destination. This approach recognises that none of the individual towns in the area is capable of competing with the major cities that act as visitor destinations, but that the combination of the visitor assets along the river can compete as an attracting, compelling and effective destination.
- 3.3 It is intended that the Destination Tweed project will celebrate the Tweed from source to sea, building an identity beyond its 100-mile length and creating a unique and world-class visitor destination that will connect and promote multiple assets and be known as one of the great long distance routes in the UK. The River Tweed is a Special Area of Conservation famed for its salmon fishing, great houses and castles, literary connections (Walter Scott, Hogg) and mountain biking. Whilst the Tweed has an incredible array of natural, built and cultural heritage concentrated in and around its banks, it is little known at a national level. The rural economy is increasingly fragile, with the traditional industries such as textiles, farming and fishing being in decline. Tourism can be core to the region's future and has huge potential. This project will showcase the extraordinary assets and experiences on offer.

4 BORDERLANDS - DESTINATION TWEED PROJECT.

- 4.1 This is a large scale strategic project that is aiming to join up an ambitious range of assets, facilities, businesses and activities. It has the potential to raise the visitor profile of the area nationally and internationally. Currently, it is anticipated that the project will cost approximately £20M, with £11M being budgeted as part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.
- 4.2 A shared use trail will connect Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed and beyond, providing a focal point for a wide range of conservation and enhancement projects throughout. This cross-border approach helps to support the strategic nature of the project and make it relevant in a Borderlands context. Each year an estimated 375,000 visitors will enjoy the 100-mile route, underpinned by an innovative interpretive experience. An ambitious activity programme will deliver events, learning, skills, training and business development opportunities, supporting a comprehensive approach to place development and regeneration.

4.3 Destination Tweed currently includes the following key components:

- The Tweed Trail giving users a complete and accessible experience from beyond the source to the sea, stretching from Moffat in Dumfries & Galloway to Berwick upon Tweed in Northumberland.
- Ground-breaking immersive interpretive experience. Site specific and fixed interpretation mixed with a digital smart phone audio trail incorporating tours, music, images, video, augmented reality and geo-mapping.
- Archaeology projects that assess, interpret and inform the conservation of archaeological assets along the Tweed, uncovering new stories according to key themes that use the Tweed as a 'timeline'.
- The establishment of dedicated hub/launch points in each of the Upper, Middle, Lower sections to facilitate easy navigation of the Trail and knowledge sharing. For example, a restored Crook Inn could provide services like overnight accommodation, a café, volunteer base and interpretation in the more remote Upper sections.
- Economic focused projects that harness existing assets, building business awareness and confidence, cross-selling, resilience and new services and products. Community grants, joint promotion and connectivity is intended to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
- River restoration projects that improve the character and biodiversity of the river by improving water quality, controlling invasive species, re-naturalising channelised stretches, thus helping to enhance the building blocks upon which the commercial fishery is based.
- Cultural projects and events that celebrate the intangible heritage of the Tweed including river celebrations and festivals to foster a shared ownership and vision that will protect the Tweed for future generations.
- Enhancing existing relationships and developing new partnerships and opportunities for the communities and stakeholders that live and work within and around the Tweed Valley.

5 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

- 5.1 At the outset of project planning, Tweed Forum identified a funding package that represented both the numerous partners engaged in the project, but also the financial commitment required for the development phase of Destination Tweed. On behalf of the partners, Tweed Forum currently has an application being processed by the National lottery Heritage Fun (NLHF) to provide a further major contribution to the project costs (£2.98M). It is especially important that Scottish Borders Council demonstrates its commitment to the project in order to provide reassurance to funders like NLHF that the project will move forward and be delivered successfully.

5.2 It is intended that the development phase of the project will run from March 2020 to March 2022 and will be funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with match funding from Scottish Borders Council, Sustrans and nine other relevant funding organisations. The development phase will consist of:

- Work Surveys
- Capacity Building Activity
- Professional Fees
- Recruitment and staffing

5.3 The total cost of the development phase identified by Tweed Forum is £561,000. The match funding required from Scottish Borders Council is £174,500, which represents 31% of the overall cost of the development phase.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) In order to allow the Council to demonstrate its commitment to the project, officers have worked closely with colleagues in Tweed Forum and with other services to identify the £174,500 that is required. The development funding has been identified from a number of existing budgets.
- (b) In 2019/20, it is proposed that £35,000 from the Economic Development budget is allocated. In 2020/2021 it is proposed that £65,000 is allocated from a one off signage budget that is currently in an earmarked budget. This budget was identified a number of years ago as a contribution to support the promotion of the Scottish Borders through the development and installation of some new tourism signage on key routes in the area. In view of the major promotional potential of the Destination Tweed project, officers consider that using this funding to support the development phase of the Destination Tweed project will be a more effective use of this budget in the current promotional context.
- (c) It is also recommended that £70,000 from the Economic Development budget (Tourism) is allocated in 2020/21. This will be deliverable as the Tour of Britain will not be hosted in that financial year, creating an opportunity to support this project. £4,500 will be allocated within the Planning service budget in support of the Archaeological, Biodiversity, Access and Heritage elements of the project.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

Tourism development is a priority in the Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023 and in the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. Product development is required to continue to develop the tourism sector and offer a level of support required to motivate and inspire businesses. The Council may suffer reputational damage if it does not show commitment to the development phase by declining to provide the

required funding. In addition, if the development phase cannot be appropriately funded, then the project will not be able to progress, thus missing an opportunity for a major investment in the Scottish Borders. A risk register is being developed for this project and this will be regularly updated and reviewed to ensure successful outcomes.

6.3 **Equalities**

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is not required as this report relates to the continuation of product development support for this project. A key aspect of the Council's Economic Development service activity is to reduce barriers to economic inequality and encourage inclusive economic growth and this will inform the detailed actions developed as part of the tourism action plan.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

Tourism development delivers a number of key outputs and outcomes that provide economic benefit and benefits to help sustain local communities. The visitor economy has a positive economic impact on towns and rural areas across the Scottish Borders. The Destination Tweed Project will promote sustainable economic growth. The project, led by Tweed Forum, enables the private and public sectors to work together and invest in improvements to the local business environment, while contributing to the wider regeneration of the local community.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

There is no anticipated net increase in carbon emissions at a Scottish Borders level. Individual projects which are taken forward as part of the project will be assessed appropriately to minimise impacts and maximise low carbon opportunities.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

Rural proofing is not required because this project does not change Council strategy or policy. However, the visitor economy is particularly important for the rural areas and communities of the Scottish Borders, often providing some of the limited employment opportunities in these areas.

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

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

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, the Monitoring Officer / Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson
Executive Director

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: N/A

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 19 December 2019

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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