
TWEED VALLEY TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT UPDATE

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 JUNE 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Tweed Valley Tourism Business Improvement District (BID), outlines the support provided by the Council for the BID and recommends appropriate governance support.**
- 1.2 The Tweed Valley BID Steering Group has developed an exciting vision for the future of tourism in the Tweed Valley. The BID business plan has a clear objective of growing a stronger, more sustainable tourism industry in the Tweed Valley. The BID levy will provide an estimated income of £350,000 over 5 years to deliver a range of tourism development and marketing activity, potentially supplemented by other external funding opportunities.
- 1.3 The Steering Group has engaged with a wide range of businesses during the consultation process and understands the ambitions of local businesses to develop and grow tourism in the area. With the formal agreement of the Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council, the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Steering Group progressed to a formal ballot on 14 November 2019. The outcome of the ballot was successful.
- 1.4 The BID was due to become operational in April 2020. However, due to the COVID19 pandemic and with the current business restrictions and challenges for the local tourism and hospitality sector, the Tweed Valley BID company agreed to suspend the collection of BID levies for one year until April 2021. The group has developed an initial COVID19 recovery response plan focusing on supporting businesses with digital advice and guidance as well as further development of their marketing activities to increase the profile of the Tweed Valley as a safe outdoor destination for visitors.
- 1.5 It is important that governance processes and procedures are established to ensure appropriate transparency of funding and resources. In order to monitor the Council's financial input and contribution to the project, the Council agreed that an Elected Member representative is nominated on to the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Board. It is recommended that a Tweeddale Ward member should be proposed for the Board.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Council:-

- (a) Notes the successful Tweed Valley Tourism BID ballot on 14 November 2019;**
- (b) Notes the positive steps, Tweed Valley Tourism BID Company are progressing in terms of their initial COVID19 recovery response to support local tourism and hospitality businesses; and**
- (c) agrees to appoint an Elected Member from Tweeddale to represent the Council on the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Board.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Tweed Valley Tourism BID Steering Group has developed an exciting vision for the future of tourism in the Tweed Valley. The BID business plan has a clear objective of growing a strong, sustainable tourism industry in the Tweed Valley. The key aims of the Tweed Valley Tourism BID are to
1. Develop the Tweed Valley into a world-class activity destination
 2. Ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism in the area
 3. Improve the visitor experience
 4. Increase the number of visitors
 5. Give visitors more reasons to stay longer and spend more
 6. Help create local jobs

The BID levy will provide an estimated income of £350,000 over 5 years to deliver a range of tourism development and marketing activity, potentially supplemented by other external funding opportunities.

4 TWEED VALLEY TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

- 4.1 The Tweed Valley Tourism BID was progressed following a period of business plan development and local business consultation. With the formal agreement of the Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council, the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Steering Group progressed to a formal ballot on 14 November 2019. The outcome of the ballot was successful.
- 4.2 The Steering Group have progressed with the next development phase of the BID including establishing a legal entity (BID company); setting up financial and administration arrangements; and recruiting project management resources. The business plan, which was developed by the Steering Group and consulted with local businesses during the development phase, was planned to be implemented over the five year period from 1 April 2020.
- 4.3 Due to the COVID19 pandemic and current business restrictions and challenges for the local tourism and hospitality sector, the Tweed Valley BID company agreed to suspend the collection of BID levies for one year until April 2021. The group has developed an initial COVID19 recovery response plan focusing on supporting businesses in two key areas: 1) specific digital advice, guidance and support 2) further development of their marketing activities including brand & website development and social media to increase the profile of the Tweed Valley as a safe outdoor destination for visitors. Funding has been secured from Scotland's Towns Partnership and VisitScotland as well as a contribution of £15,000 from the Council's Economic Development Service to deliver these activities.
- 4.4 When the BID becomes operational in terms of levy collection in April 2021, financial monitoring of the BID levy collection will be provided by the Council's Customer Services team. A detailed Operating Agreement between the Council and the new proposed BID company is at the final stages of being approved. The Council will issue appropriate bills advising those in the designated BID area of the requirement to collect the BID levy on behalf of the new BID company.

- 4.5 It is important that governance processes and procedures are established to ensure appropriate transparency of funding and resources. In order to monitor the Council's financial input and contribution to the project, Executive agreed that an Elected Member representative is nominated on to the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Board.
- 4.6 For Elected Member's duties on the Board, the Council has guidance within its Code of Conduct which should be considered in terms of Councillors being directors, particularly with regard to the requirement to comply with the rules of the organisation as well as code of conduct and declaring interests. It is the duty of the nominated Elected Member to observe and comply in all respects with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. It is their responsibility as a Councillor to make sure that they are familiar with, and that their actions comply with, the provisions of the Code.
- 4.7 It is recommended that a Tweeddale Ward member is nominated for the Board. An appropriate Council officer will also provide advisory support and act as an observer on the Board where appropriate.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There is a very limited financial implication in relation to the Tweed Valley Tourism BID, which was covered under the previous report to Executive.

5.2 Risk & Mitigations

The representation of an Elected Member on the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Board, along with appropriate Council and BID Scotland advisory support, will help to ensure the appropriate management of the project. Financial monitoring of the BID levy collection will be provided by the Council's Customer Services team.

5.3 Equalities Integrated Impact Assessment

The Economic Development Service will recommend to the Tweed Valley Tourism BID Steering Group and BID companies to undertake Integrated Impact Assessments at the appropriate stages of project proposals.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

Business Improvement District (BID) initiatives are promoted by the Scottish Government to support sustainable economic growth. The BID model, led by the private sector, 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 Rural Proofing

Rural Proofing is not required as the proposal does not relate to new or amended Council policy or strategy. Towns and town centres act as a potential hub for rural communities and it is anticipated that any actions/activities would add value to the wider rural economy rather than having a negative impact.

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 Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Comms, and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson **Signature**
Executive Director, Corporate improvement and Economy

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee 20 August 2019

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