
SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Report by Director, Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

23 September 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks the agreement of Scottish Borders Council for the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy (Appendix 1), which has been produced by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership.**
- 1.2 This report follows on from the report on the draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy discussed by Scottish Borders Council at its meeting on 17 June 2021. At that meeting the Council endorsed the draft Strategy and agreed to support the planned consultation on the document. It also agreed to receive, following consultation, the finalised version of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy at today's meeting for review and approval.
- 1.3 The Strategy has been produced by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP). The REP comprises members of Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and SOSE, together with appointed members from business, communities, social enterprise, third sector, registered social landlords, and representatives from colleges, universities and public bodies. Scottish Borders Council has been involved in every stage of the development of the Strategy. The membership of the REP from the Council comprises Councillors Haslam, Rowley, Mountford and Bell with Councillor Robson as a substitute. The chair of the REP rotates annually (based on financial years) between Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) and Scottish Borders Council (SBC), and Councillor Rowley has chaired the REP in this final crucial phase of the development and agreement of the Strategy.
- 1.4 The consultation on the draft Strategy has been completed. Efforts to ensure an extensive reach led to the REP hearing from about 350 people including representatives of organisations. This included close to 100 detailed responses offering constructive feedback to help positively refine the Strategy. There was a large degree of support for the Strategy and its themes. However there were some comments relating to the detail of the Strategy that resulted in amendments that were approved by the REP. The REP agreed the Strategy at its meeting on Thursday 2 September 2021. A Delivery Plan of actions is being developed.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Agrees the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy in Appendix 1; and**
- b) Agrees to receive the Strategy's Delivery Plan and a Measurement Framework for the Strategy at a future meeting.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) was formed in September 2020. It has a collective ambition to deliver a clear and compelling vision and direction for the economic success of the South of Scotland which harnesses the efforts of all its partners. The main initial task of the REP has been leading and overseeing the development of a South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. The REP has 31 members and they come from the community, third sector, social enterprise, business, Higher and Further Education and joint Elected Members appointed from both Councils (D&GC and SBC) and South of Scotland Enterprise Board members.
- 3.2 The Chair of the REP rotates between Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council on an annual basis based on financial years. The current chair is Councillor Mark Rowley, Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Finance, Scottish Borders Council. He has chaired the REP in this final crucial phase of the development and agreement of the Strategy. The membership of the REP from Scottish Borders Council comprises Councillors Haslam, Rowley, Mountford and Bell with Councillor Robson as a substitute. Scottish Borders Council has been involved at every stage in the development of the Strategy.

4 CONSULTATION ON THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

- 4.1 At its meeting on 17 June the Council endorsed the draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy produced by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership. It also agreed to support the planned consultation on the Strategy and that, following consultation, the finalised version of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy should be submitted to today's meeting for review and approval.
- 4.2 The consultation on the draft South of Scotland Economic Strategy began on the 2 July 2021 and finished on the 16 August 2021. It was well publicised via social media and digital/web means, radio, newspaper and select publication adverts and an on-line public survey was hosted on 'Citizen Space' by Scottish Borders Council. Key policy leads in both national agencies and Scottish Government were also engaged and work took place with young people to ascertain their views. In total some 350 people including representatives of organisations provided views on the draft Strategy. This included close to 100 detailed responses offering constructive feedback to help positively refine the Strategy. These added to the 1,000 the REP heard from back in March on the development of the draft Strategy.
- 4.3 The vision and the themes and priorities in the Strategy were strongly supported. Many responses identified areas where the Strategy could be positively refined and strengthened. Generally comments were focused on the need for greater clarity, particularly around some of the challenges; a stronger emphasis on key areas including for example a Just Transition to Net Zero; ensuring language was kept simple; and to address a number of perceived omissions or suggested alternative wording to better reflect priorities. A number of comments received called for greater recognition of existing inequalities faced by some within the region, particularly women, as well as a need to make more of the knowledge wealth of an ageing population.

5. SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

- 5.1 The Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 is a ten-year strategy. It seeks to maximise the economic opportunities in the South Scotland, whilst taking account of its key challenges. It is shaped by the engagement of organisations and people across the region together with the members of the REP. Its vision recognises the unique strengths of the South of Scotland in relation to its natural capital, the quality of its communities and cultural identity and looks to increase the working population and attract visitors to the region. Inclusivity, sustainability, innovation and creativity, and making the most of everyone's potential have been key elements in influencing the draft Strategy's proposed vision, themes and priorities.
- 5.2 From this vision, the Strategy identifies six themes together with accompanying priorities. The themes are:
- Skilled and Ambitious People
 - Innovative and Enterprising
 - Rewarding and Fair Work
 - Cultural and Creative Excellence
 - Green and Sustainable Economy
 - Thriving and Distinct Communities
- 5.3 These themes and priorities provide the ambition and intent for the development of a delivery plan with a three year focus. The Plan aims to identify actions that are:
- Strategic, high-level and collaborative,
 - New or add value to what is already happening,
 - Able to demonstrate a tangible impact across the themes of the Strategy, and are
 - Stretching and ambitious but ultimately deliverable within the timeframe of the delivery Plan (3 years).

A draft delivery plan is being discussed by the REP with the final Delivery Plan to be submitted to a future meeting of the Council for its consideration.

- 5.4 The REP has worked on a measurement framework for the Strategy. This focuses on measuring progress towards the Strategy's aims and ambitions and embraces social and environmental measures as well as economic ones. This Framework will also be submitted to a future meeting of the Council.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

The Council has supported the development of the Strategy and is contributing to the consultancy work of RSM consultants through the Economic Development budget.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy will make a vital contribution vital to the economic development aspects of strategic planning in Scottish Borders that is taken forward by Scottish Borders Council and the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership. Without the Strategy there would be a significant strategic policy gap.

- b) There is reputational risk for the Council in not strongly supporting the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. Working with our partners, Scottish Borders Council has played a key role in the draft Strategy's development.
- c) Partnership working is critical to the success of economic development. The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy is aimed at ensuring public, private, community and voluntary bodies work together with a common purpose.

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

Inclusive Growth and equality matters are at the heart of the development of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy. The development of the Strategy has been informed by an Integrated Impact Assessment sub-group of the REP which included key officers in the Council. The sub-group assessed the draft Strategy and recommended changes which have now been incorporated into the final Strategy document.

6.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy has a major focus on sustainable economic growth linked to the SDG.

6.5 Climate Change

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy is predicated on a Just Transition to Net Zero and is expected to have positive implications for reducing carbon emissions.

6.6 Rural Proofing

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy is about improving the competitiveness and sustainability of its constituent rural economies.

6.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There will be no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals set out in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Director of Finance & Corporate Governance, Chief Legal Officer (and Monitoring Officer), Director of People, Performance & Change, Clerk to the Council, and Communications Team have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.
- 7.2 The Corporate Management Team has been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Director, Resilient Communities

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council 31 October 2019, Scottish Borders Council Executive Committee 15 September 2020 and Scottish Borders Council 17 June 2021.

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