
Scottish Borders Strategic Events Plan

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

Executive Committee

7 December 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper provides Elected Members with an update on a proposed new Scottish Borders Strategic Events Plan following a recent review by industry experts and makes interim recommendations on a suggested direction of travel.**
- 1.2 The current Strategic Events Plan was produced in 2014 and was designed to reference the period between 2014 and 2020. A refresh is therefore recommended to take account of the severe impact inflicted on the events sector by the COVID 19 pandemic and to place more emphasis on environmental sustainability and collaborative working.
- 1.3 This piece of work is a precursor to the delivery of a new strategy and plan and is designed to explore the ambition of the Council and the direction of travel in relation to the events sector. The interim report makes clear recommendations on how the events sector could be strengthened and developed and has highlighted the importance of events to the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland following consultation with a number of key partners and event organisers.
- 1.4 The report indicates that there is a high level of ambition across the sector and a post-covid optimism, but clearly indicates that additional support from Scottish Borders Council and other key stakeholders will be required to help secure further growth and prosperity within the events sector. It is clear that whilst further support for the events sector would be extremely welcomed and would help the Scottish Borders continue to flourish, it would have to be resourced and careful consideration would be required in relation to the existing financial situation which is extremely challenging.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:

- (a) Discusses the proposals contained within this report; and**
- (b) Agrees that additional work to further develop the new Strategic Events Plan in collaboration with Elected Members and key stakeholders should be undertaken, with the results of this work brought back to Committee at an appropriate date.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Strategic events are recognised as an important part of the social and economic fabric of communities in the Scottish Borders and they have the potential to enrich the lives of local residents, attract visitors and improve the economic viability of an area. They can help showcase our area to the outside world and encourage more people to visit this part of Scotland, thereby providing opportunities for local communities and helping the development of the local supply chain and the circular economy.
- 3.2 Strategic events also have an important role to play in supporting sustainable inclusive economic growth and pre-covid they contributed to a thriving tourism sector in the South of Scotland. A forecast in 2019/20 suggested the associated benefits of the events sector in relation to the Scottish economy was as follows:
 - 2,844 full time equivalent jobs (FTE jobs)
 - £95.3m gross value added (GVA)
 - £238.1m net economic income (NEI)
 - £305.4m gross economic activity (GEA)
- 3.3 It has previously been estimated that events can generate and contribute over £7million per annum to the local economy in the Scottish Borders.
- 3.4 Scottish Borders Council has traditionally helped support a number of strategic events throughout the region such as the Melrose 7's, The Tour of Britain Cycling Event, The Borders Book Festival and the Jim Clark Rally. These events are considered to be very important for the local economy and can provide worldwide exposure on a regular basis.
- 3.5 The Scottish Borders Strategic Events Plan (The current plan) was produced in 2014 and covered the period from 2014 to 2020. A refresh of the current document is now recommended, primarily to take account of changes since 2014 which have had an impact on the events industry, including the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic and placing more emphasis on environmental sustainability and collaborative working across the South of Scotland.
- 3.6 It is clear that almost every event in the Scottish Borders has been cancelled or at least severely curtailed by the Covid 19 pandemic during the past eighteen months, with far reaching consequences for the whole sector. It is also clear that the events sector needs to keep evolving and consideration should be given to the development and promotion of greener events that have low carbon and renewable credentials. There should also be a move towards existing strategic events becoming more self-sustaining, which would potentially help Scottish Borders Council support new ventures within the context of an extremely challenging financial environment.
- 3.7 At the present time, Scottish Borders Council has one officer that deals primarily with the events sector and this role is currently undertaken on a part-time basis.

3.8 This interim report has been developed by local consultants Stuart Turner (previously Head of Events at EventScotland) who developed the 'Scotland a Perfect Stage' strategy and Stephen Maclean a local event development consultant. They have recently engaged with a number of key national and local stakeholders in order to develop a comprehensive and insightful interim report for consideration.

4 PROPOSAL

4.1 This initial piece of work provides Elected Members with a number of key recommendations and challenges the ambition of Scottish Borders Council in relation to the development of a proposed new strategic events plan. There is a suggested direction of travel, but that will be dependent on additional financial support and staff resources being made available, within the context of an extremely challenging financial situation.

4.2 The key recommendations from the initial piece of work undertaken by the Consultants are detailed below:

- The strategic events plan should take into consideration stakeholders and communities and other relevant strategies, including the Regional Economic Strategy and Scotland Outlook 2030;
- Scottish Borders Council should give consideration to providing additional resources to help support the events sector and encourage a cross departmental approach as well as nominating an Elected Member to act as an 'Events Champion'. Wider stakeholders, including SOSE, Live Borders and EventScotland are also key to developing a collaborative South of Scotland approach and potentially helping to fund an evolving plan to help develop the events sector in the Scottish Borders;
- The local community is also vitally important and developing a stakeholder forum is essential to collaborate and identify priority projects and possible infrastructure developments throughout the region. There is also a need to nurture and develop a network of event organisers to help develop industry knowledge, best practice and to provide collaboration and sector updates;
- The current event funding process should be reviewed and aligned to the new events plan, ensuring that criteria and desired outcomes of investment meet strategic objectives and decision making is clear and transparent. To help facilitate this objective the current staff resource should be enhanced, along with a proposed rolling three year events budget to help provide more consistent approach and maximise all Council funding opportunities across all departments;
- There is a need to identify priority infrastructure developments in key parts of the region and work collaboratively with other key stakeholders such as SOSE to help advance the projects deemed most advantageous;

- There must be a clear reporting structure linked to specific outcomes which are part of the funding process, particularly around hybrid events. Funding should help encourage the local supply chain by using local producers and businesses;
- More support and guidance should be provided by Council Officers, especially in relation to all legislative and health and safety requirements, especially the Council Safety Advisory Group (SAG) process as well as producing a list of key contacts across all agencies;
- Event organisers are still recovering from the effects of the pandemic and require Scottish Borders Council to be as responsive as possible. There is a real need for ongoing support both financial and in-kind, with many event organisers seeing their event infrastructure costs escalating over the past eighteen months which they cannot sustain;
- Long term sustainability and the Just Transition to Net Zero are high priorities and should provide key links to the Regional Economic Strategy. Event support should reflect the net zero requirements and Scottish Borders Council should support and develop information sharing and guidance linked to National schemes; and
- As part of event sector development, marketing and promotional opportunities should be maximised to raise the profile of the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland through the South of Scotland Destination Alliance and Visit Scotland.

4.3 It is recommended that Council Officers discuss the development of a number of different scenarios for a refreshed Events Plan with the consultants, based on the outcome of discussions with Elected Members and other key stakeholders. It is expected that this piece of work will range from a continuation of the current funding and resource allocation to more ambitious scenarios, depending on the level of Elected Member support.

4.4 It is proposed that a revised events plan that highlights the different scenarios be brought back to committee at a later date for further discussion.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The interim report recommends that additional financial and resourcing support is provided to help support the events sector. However, it is imperative that any discussions that relate to additional resourcing are connected directly to the existing budgetary process.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The key risk associated with this proposal centres on the prospect of the events sector failing because of a lack of support from key partners and stakeholders. If the Council does not support and develop the events sector, there is a risk that the economic, environmental and social benefits will not be maximised and the event sector may be irreparably damaged.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

There are no direct implications associated with an Integrated Impact Assessment. However, a key aspect of Scottish Borders Council's work in relation to Economic Development is to reduce barriers to inequality and help to promote sustainable, inclusive economic development. An equality impact assessment (EIA) will be undertaken as part of the development of a new Strategic Events Plan.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

A new Strategic Events Plan will seek to ensure that the planning, development and delivery of events incorporates socially and environmentally responsible decision making, balanced with providing economic benefits to help sustain local communities.

5.5 **Climate Change**

There are no direct implications associated to climate change in the report.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

This proposal is designed to help local businesses and to encourage more opportunities for rural areas.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

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

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

There are no changes to the scheme of administration or the scheme of delegation proposed in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig
Director of Resilient Communities

Signature

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference:

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

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