

## **EVENT STRATEGY FOR THE SCOTTISH BORDERS 2022 TO 2027**

### **1. FOREWORD -**

Culture, heritage, sport, leisure, landscape, art and food and drink. The Scottish Borders has events which encapsulate all that is special about this area and which make people want to live here and visit, year after year.

Scottish Borders Council's support for a whole range of event organisers over many years has helped establish an annual calendar of sustainable events which bring in hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area every year.

These deliver significant economic benefits to local businesses, from accommodation providers to retail and food and drink establishments, and of course provide entertainment, enjoyment and positive experiences for local people too.

It is vital that this continues, and that opportunities are grasped to increase the number and diversity of events held here, and that we also try and attract new national and international events to the Scottish Borders, especially in light of the impacts of the COVID 19 Pandemic. I believe it is vital to support this vibrant industry sector and help to re-establish it throughout the Scottish Borders and be seen as a host destination for future events.

The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and the ongoing work of the Borderlands Partnership along with the development of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy will undoubtedly open doors to new opportunities for the growth of new events across the South of Scotland and in our neighbouring areas, potentially bringing in new audiences to the Scottish Borders.

In addition to these partnerships, the Council's work with other organisations is a key component of the Events Strategy, whether that be the co-ordination of emergency services through the Council's Safety Advisory Group which is designed to help support organisers deliver safer and more successful events, or with EventScotland to attract high profile events to our area.

In challenging financial times for local authorities the Council must prioritise its investments to deliver the maximum positive benefit to the region. Events are an area where careful investment and the support, advice and engagement of a range of Council services can go a long way, as has been seen to date.

This is an ambitious new Strategic Events Plan and one which will continue and build upon the excellent work to date and see the Scottish Borders strengthen its reputation as one of Scotland's leading event destinations.

**Councillors Euan Jardine and Scott Hamilton**  
**July 2022**

## **2. VISION**

The Scottish Borders will be a dynamic event destination, recognised nationally and internationally with a diverse and inspirational portfolio of outstanding events that delivers impacts for both locals and visitors.

## **3. AIM**

Align the events industry behind an ambitious single strategy for the Scottish Borders and maximise the benefits derived from a portfolio of top-quality events delivered across the region, including the attraction, promotion and delivery of events of international and national standing and quality.

## **4. WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE**

By 2027, if this strategy is successful, we should see evident change in the events portfolio as well as the events industry. This would include:

- An outstanding events portfolio with strong Scottish Borders content and a higher proportion of home-grown events.
- A top-quality portfolio delivering more events of an international and national standing and excellent quality.
- An exciting events portfolio spread more evenly across the year, across genres and geographically across the whole of the Scottish Borders.
- An events portfolio which is attractive and inspiring for the people of the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland
- An integrated Industry which is both resilient and cohesive while also driving best practice
- An industry which communicates well and maximises the opportunities available
- An industry which is recognised as a leader in sustainability (environmental, social and economic) and accessibility
- A place where event activity is recognised as contributing to physical and mental wellbeing
- A place where events are recognised as a significant contributor to economic impact and the prosperity of the area
- A place where events are valued, supported and embraced by their local host communities.

## **5. INTRODUCTION**

The previous Scottish Borders Event Strategy Plan was produced by SBC in 2014 and ran from 2014 to 2020. It now requires refreshing and updating to take account of changes which have taken place since 2014, including the recent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A review of the Event Strategy Plan was conducted in 2021 by independent consultants. The review was set in a context of refreshing the existing strategy with a particular focus on the impact of the pandemic on the events sector. Through consultation and research, it became apparent there was a much higher level of ambition across the sector and some specific conditions which strongly indicate this was an optimum time to invest in the events sector.

Firstly, the pandemic caused significant changes in the events sector. To recover from these negative impacts there was a need to design a different future rather than try to get back to the position before the Pandemic.

Secondly there was a movement towards a South of Scotland approach including additional co-operation and collaboration with key partners. This opens up a range of opportunities and requires a different approach.

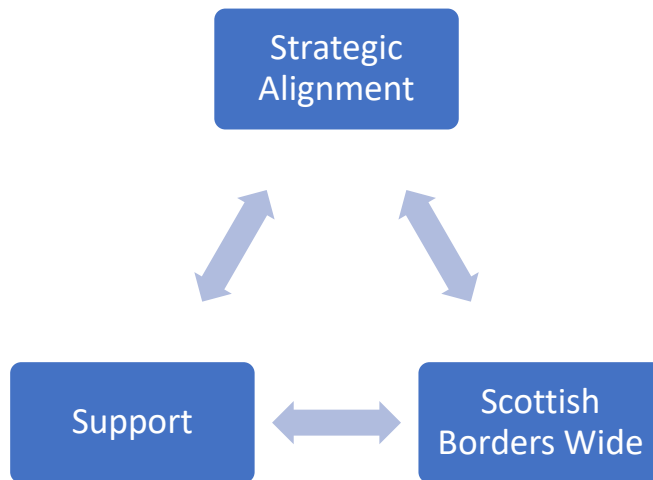
A third factor was the development of the [Regional Economic Strategy](#) (RES) which clearly sets out our ambition for the South of Scotland. The Regional Economic Strategy themes and proposals detailed within the RES and the associated [Delivery Plan](#) resonate very closely with the outputs of the research undertaken in the development of this report. The results clearly indicate that the events sector can play a significant role in helping to deliver multiple benefits for the Scottish Borders and the South.

There are key opportunities for collaborative working across the South of Scotland, especially with key strategic partners such as Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise and the South of Scotland Destination Alliance. There are also opportunities to access additional funding streams within programmes of work such as the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the UK Government Levelling Up process. This can potentially provide scope for new, exciting and innovative events to be developed; and to offer unique experiences for visitors and the targeting of new prospective audiences.

This strategy was developed based on significant consultation with many and varied parties within the event industry. Those conversations informed the core areas of focus within the strategy.

## **6. STRATEGIC APPROACH**

Our strategy is based around three key themes:



- **Strategic Alignment:** Strong industry communication will be developed to help ensure all agencies, including all Local Authority Departments and National Agencies are strategically aligned and working in collaboration towards common goals and outcomes.
- **Support:** Identified events in the Scottish Borders which can help deliver the strategy will be supported through a combination of strategic advice, funding, and participation in the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) process. The industry will also provide support to those involved in delivering events with the sharing of best practice and the exchange of ideas.
- **Scottish Borders Wide:** To ensure that a portfolio of events is delivered throughout the Scottish Borders there will need to be engagement with communities, strategic partners and event organisers in order to help deliver a more diverse geographical spread and seasonality of events.

### 6.1. Strategic Alignment

*Create specific communication channels and strategic 'touch points' to support collaboration between agencies and stakeholders.*

Industry alignment with the strategy is essential. The key elements are:

1. Having a strategic intent that is clear and widely understood to allow for targeted and proactive planning.
2. For the events industry to work collectively in the development and delivery of events.

#### 6.1.1. Clear Strategic Intent

A collaborative approach is required to support and create an events portfolio that is both exciting and fit-for-purpose. The Scottish Borders requires a shared understanding of what type of events are good for the region and appeal to the people who live here.

By creating an environment for collaboration and proactive planning with clear high-level alignment to this strategy the events industry in the Scottish Borders will be able to deliver events which are valued by those involved in delivering them, those attending them, those visiting the area and vitally those living in the communities where the events take place.

The following aspects are required to enable success in this area:

- A balanced portfolio of exciting events including sporting, cultural and business events, home-grown and brought-in events, as well as both community and commercial
- A geographical and calendar spread as well as a range of size and scale.
- The attraction and delivery of more quality related events of international and national standing
- Support agencies, including Scottish Borders Council taking a proactive approach to event funding, considering multiyear support, identifying gaps in the portfolio and attract or develop suitable events.
- Delivering event support that is closely aligned with the identity of the Scottish Borders and is linked closely to its people. The events should also be aligned to the [National Events Strategy](#) which has the following key themes:
  - o Our people
  - o Our cultural identity and heritage
  - o Our natural environment
  - o Our built facilities
  - o Our Signature Events
- Events that create a strong economic impact for the Scottish Borders as part of the wider Regional Economic Strategy
- The success of events is assessed not only on economic impact, but also place making, community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and other key indicators.

#### **6.1.2. Collective Working**

An aligned and integrated approach will support the event industry's ability to be competitive, achieve more through the delivery of events, and help promote a stronger and more sustainable industry in the Scottish Borders.

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Develop strong, collaborative relationships between the events industry, supply chain and the public sector.
- Development of an industry network to facilitate the sharing of information, communicating best practice and provide a structure for collaboration.
- Industry and public sector working closely together, including with departments across the local authority.

- As recovery from the negative impacts of the pandemic continues the events industry, led by Scottish Borders Council, should identify areas requiring public sector support.
- Work together to attract events to the Scottish Borders and to maximise their impact for the region.
- Identify and utilise a preferred calendar for events.
- Working together to deliver more events of international and national standing and excellent quality.
- Aim to integrate the industry within the context that the events industry is largely event organisers focused on a single event per year and the workforce is largely made up of volunteers

## **6.2. Support**

*Identified events in Scottish Borders, which can help deliver the strategy, are supported through strategic advice, funding, and the SAG process. The industry also provides support to those involved in delivering events with the sharing of best practice and exchange of ideas.*

The public sector provides support to events to assist in their delivery and development. Events will also support each other through close networking.

The role of the public sector as set out in 'Roles' below includes those of Scottish Borders Council through strategic advice, support in operational delivery and the SAG advisory group which is a statutory process undertaken by Scottish Borders Council to help event co-ordination and promote health and safety. The SAG process in the Scottish Borders has been recognised as best practice within Scotland and the Local Authority aims to maintain this level of excellence.

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Scottish Borders Council increasing the financial and staffing resource allocated to supporting the events industry.
- Industry supporting each other through collaborative working
- Strategic funding delivered to maximise benefits from a portfolio of events planned across the Scottish Borders.
- Continue with the current format of the Scottish Borders SAG process, which has been recognised as best practice.
- Increased available resource in funding programme(s) with longer-term outlooks and clear in-kind support agreements to enable the events industry to deliver increased value.
- Direct support to developing events with a strong Scottish Borders content and a high proportion of home-grown events.

### 6.3. Scottish Borders Wide

*The portfolio of events must reflect equality, diversity and inclusion with full engagement and representation within communities and utilise existing assets, geographical spread and seasonality.*

The event portfolio should be structured to encourage visitors and residents to be drawn to localities across the Scottish Borders. Those developing and supporting events must do so with a view to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion are all considered.

Accessibility at events is key and the Scottish Borders should deliver events that are recognised as examples of best practice.

It is also important to link strongly with the Regional Economic Strategy priorities for green and sustainable economies and thriving, distinct communities.

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Assess the spread of existing and future events in the Scottish Borders to ensure event support is distributed across the whole area, across genres and across each year.
- Consider free-to-attend events as positive inclusions in the portfolio.
- Ensure the industry is engaged and reassured regarding delivering events in the current economic climate.
- For events in locations with limited commercial draw an element of public support should be available to maximise benefits to event organisers, communities and localities.
- Develop a portfolio of events which is attractive and inspiring to the people of the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland. Create a balanced portfolio considering age, region, ethnicity, religion, and budget.
- Promoting engagement from businesses and communities with a view to encouraging larger events to take place in the Scottish Borders more frequently
- Develop events that contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of the Scottish Borders.
- Events in the Scottish Borders should work to being supported and embraced by their local host communities and demonstrate their significant contribution to the prosperity of the area.
- Creating the foundations for a long-lasting, strong, sustainable events industry in the Scottish Borders for the future.

## 7. THE FOUNDATIONS

Delivering this strategy requires **strong foundations**, built upon three pillars:

- **People:** Developing skills, training, CPD for those in the industry and having career paths in *an aspirational events industry in the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland*.

- **Place:** Using the assets the Scottish Borders has while making sure these are maintained and managed as well as looking to future needs.
- **Planet:** Considering long term environmental sustainability in all actions and making sure events measure their carbon footprint.

### 7.1. People

*Developing skills, training and an environment to aid professional development for those in the industry and having career paths in an aspirational events industry in the Scottish Borders / South of Scotland.*

A foundation built on capable people allows the event industry to strengthen and develop.

Linking strongly with the Regional Economic Strategy priorities to encompass skilled and ambitious people, and rewarding and fair work.

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Support the development of industry skills and capabilities specific to events through communications and collective working. Support local event organisers to help deliver events in the Scottish Borders.
- Identification of skills gaps in the industry.
- Identification of providers and programmes for more generic skills development through other bodies such as Skills Development Scotland, the education sector and training providers as well as Visit Scotland and other Regional and National organisations.
- The development of the event industry supply chain on a Scottish Borders or South of Scotland basis
- Collaboration leading to development of the event volunteer network and volunteer skills.
- Commitment of resources from all organisations in the industry to developing skills in their paid and voluntary workforce.

### 7.2. Place

*Using the assets the Scottish Borders has while making sure these are maintained and managed as well as looking to future needs.*

The Strategic Events Action Plan will support events that deliver distinctive experiences for visitors and enhances the reputation of the Scottish Borders. The area must position itself as a vibrant, authentic, exciting and creative destination, offering a wide array of sporting, adventure, heritage and cultural events and as a leading tourist destination

The Scottish Borders has a great wealth of venues/locations for events and iconic scenic backdrops, from historic houses and castles and event specific venues to new assets. The



events industry should utilise this existing infrastructure with events being 'fitted' to the Scottish Borders while also ensuring assets are widely promoted through hosting events.

Developing the infrastructure required for events is essential, identifying the infrastructure required and how to support partners in delivering improved facilities will benefit the events industry and beyond.

Authenticity is key to a successful event. Events in the Scottish Borders should reflect and celebrate those things which are authentically and intrinsically linked to the region. From identification of events through to delivery and evaluation the event should be undeniably interconnected with the Scottish Borders.

Linking strongly with the Regional Economic Strategy priority for creative and cultural excellence.

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Identification of priority infrastructure developments in collaboration with other stakeholders, including South of Scotland Enterprise and seek to advance the projects deemed most advantageous. Particularly around infrastructure requirements for events in the Tweed Valley.
- Develop an exciting event portfolio with a spread across the Scottish Borders
- Build natural assets into event delivery and promotion such as scenery, coastline and rivers which help define the Scottish Borders.
- Identification of elements holding the industry back such as accommodation, public transport, Wi-Fi, electric charging for cars and advocate for development in these areas using events to support the business case.

### **7.3. Planet**

*Considering long term environmental sustainability in all actions and making sure events measure their carbon footprint.*

The events industry in the Scottish Borders should be recognised as a leader in sustainability. Caring for the natural environment should be a priority for everyone and will remain a priority with the UK drive to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Council will support and assist event organisers to reduce their carbon footprint and take an equitable approach in the journey towards net zero

The following aspects are required to achieve success in this area:

- Event organisers are assisted in measuring their environmental footprint
- Event organisers are supported to reduce their environmental footprint
- Provision of an industry-wide view of the environmental footprint of events and how it is reducing over time.

- Encouraging event organisers to champion environmental sustainability across the industry.
- Encouraging sustainable tourism at events.

## 8. THE MECHANICS

The mechanics of how the foundations are achieved is by clarity of:

- **Roles:** Roles of all organisations and agencies involved.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Measures aligned to eventIMPACTS the national event calculator.
- **Review:** Review schedule to ensure the strategy stays relevant.

### 8.1. Roles

*Roles of all organisations and agencies involved.*

An understanding of the role each organisation has in supporting the delivery of events is beneficial for organisers, attendees and the Scottish Borders. This includes clarity around expectations, responsibilities and accountability.

The entire events industry in the Scottish Borders needs to work together to achieve event growth and development while delivering events that enhance the area and its reputation.

#### 8.1.1. The role of the private sector

Essentially it is the private sector which is at the forefront of event delivery, and therefore is best placed to make the aims of this strategy a reality.

The events industry engaging with the public sector early in their event development process will assist it in the creation of a strong, successful events portfolio in the Scottish Borders.

We believe that collaborative working will benefit all parties that are involved in the industry, providing valuable advice and insight. Resources and the capacity of event organisers tends to be a common issue in the events industry, therefore it may not be possible for everyone in the events industry to be involved in information sharing, the opportunity should be there for all.

#### 8.1.2. Roles for Towns and Rural Communities

- Identify priority events
- Engage non-event businesses
- 'Right size' events for their communities

- Draw together for a for event organisers to consult with

#### **8.1.3. Roles for Supply Chain**

- Engage with event organisers
- Localise delivery
- Be part of the industry network to enable collaborative communication

#### **8.1.4. Role for Event Organisers**

- Make events sustainable
- Engage with host communities
- Align with this strategy
- Share best practice and engage with your industry colleagues

#### **8.1.5. The Role of Scottish Borders Council**

Scottish Borders Council is a key partner in the development and delivery of events in the Scottish Borders. The local authority hosts the (SAG) process while also managing the delivery of the Events Operational Plan, which includes funding allocations and operational event support.

The recommended actions are:

- The events industry in the Scottish Borders takes ownership of the events strategy to drive it forward.
- Scottish Borders Council develops and delivers an Operational Plan which sets out the role of the Local Authority, including associated responsibilities **and a consistent approach to charging across a number of Council Departments**. This Operating Plan will pick up on remaining points from the Scottish Borders Events Strategy Review where relevant and outline assessment criteria for supporting events along with specifying activity to be undertaken by the Council. This work will include the SAG process and issues such as road closures and the erection of safety barriers along with the potential allocation of additional staff resources to help manage certain events.
- Support the industry as an advocate for the importance and positive impact of events.
- Event organisers to take advantage of promotional opportunities including with the South of Scotland Destination Alliance and VisitScotland.

## **8.2. Research and Evaluation**

*Measures aligned to [eventIMPACTS](#)*

Research and Evaluation is key to understanding progress within the industry, and what events are achieving for themselves and the Scottish Borders. Evaluation should be built into events and the measured outcomes should align with Strategic Intent.

To align with the National Events Strategy and the wider events industry measurement will align with the eventIMPACTS standards.

Linking strongly with the Regional Economic Strategy priority for an innovative and enterprising environment.

The review process for events will capture not only on economic impact, but also place making (Place), community wellbeing (People), environmental sustainability (Planet) and other key indicators

### **8.3. Review**

*Review schedule to ensure it stays relevant.*

The events industry is constantly developing; therefore, no strategy can stand still. This strategy will be reviewed at the mid-way point and fully revisited after five years by the Scottish Borders events industry led by Scottish Borders Council. Our starting position for benchmarking will be taken from 2019 (pre COVID19). The industry is now in a state of recovery and we must seek to monitor and evaluate the sector so that resources and funding can be strategically targeted to where they are most required. A twice yearly report will be taken to the Executive Council Committee in order to update Elected Members on the outcomes of the operational plan.

The mid-way check-in will seek to understand and ensure the priorities identified within the strategy are still where the greatest need lies, and that the themes remain valid and fit-for-purpose. There is then an option to retain or refresh the strategy document.