



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

# ADMINISTRATION POLICY PLAN

2022 - 2027





# INTRODUCTION

Our communities are at the heart of our progressive Scottish Conservative and Independent Administration Policy Plan, with a real focus on empowerment. We recognise that the people who know their communities and individuals are those who live and work in them.

By working with local people and listening to what they tell us, we can empower them to make the right decisions.

The next few years will present enormous challenges for the delivery of public services across our vast rural region. Given our limited resources, we cannot do it all. So we need to return to the fundamentals of local government, and the key to that will be sensible politics and policies.

To deliver the policies that will impact the region, we need to prioritise our key objectives, utilise the resources available to Scottish Borders Council and collaborate closely with our partners and our constituents living in the Scottish Borders.

We intend to create opportunities for everyone in the Scottish Borders, capitalise on the area and promote its uniqueness. We are fortunate to be part of two regional growth deals and we must firmly grasp the immense benefits offered by this once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Our clear aim is to create an innovative, community-driven, resilient region and for people to see the Scottish Borders as a great place to grow up, stay and grow old.

Policy highlights in this document include:

- CCTV provision in our towns
- Sport and culture strategy
- Utilising technology to enhance day to day services
- Neurodiversity education
- Helping carers
- Tackling loneliness
- Working to deliver the Borders Railway extension
- Utilising renewable energy
- Creating new opportunities in the creative industry sector
- Community empowerment



# FULFILLING OUR POTENTIAL

*As an administration, we want the Scottish Borders and the people living and working in it to achieve their full potential. Whether we are utilising our education resources or our natural environment, we want to drive ambition and opportunity in every corner of the Scottish Borders.*

**Neurodiversity:** We will develop an ethos in all our schools that is inclusive, tolerant and open-minded towards individual differences. We will help shape understanding of neurodiversity in our educational spaces and communities. To ensure this happens we will:

- Educate teachers about neurodiversity
- Introduce the concept of neurodiversity to the curriculum from primary school
- Encourage staff who identify as neurodivergent to contribute to operational planning
- Develop peer support in schools
- Involve neurodivergent young adults with skills to engage with young people in schools, be seen as role models, and lead projects in high schools.

**Creating Opportunities:** We will create new opportunities for young people that increase the options for extra-curricular activities. We will build on the investment already made in Inspire Learning. We will work to reduce the attainment gap and increase opportunity by:

- Increasing ways in which different methods can improve the school week through developing more non-classroom-based activity through working with local businesses and the 3rd sector
- Enhancing collaboration between Further and Higher Education, Live Borders, BREST and the Jedburgh Leisure Trust and Youth Borders
- Expanding school holiday activity programmes
- Developing our Young Work Force through work experience, training and the Modern Apprenticeship Programme
- Supporting the development of Esports clubs throughout the Scottish Borders.

**Building Resilience & Relationships:** We will work within our schools to make sure that our education settings continue to develop and support young people both inside and outside traditional educational settings. We will do this through the following:

- Encouraging parents and guardians to become more involved in young people's education
- Creating pathways to build resilience and self-confidence
- Maximising the potential of our young people
- Supporting already established organisations that contribute and work in this area
- Using technology to enhance skills and education across the Scottish Borders through collaboration between schools.

**Creative Industries:** We will target our underdeveloped creative industries. To do this, we will:

- Promote the Scottish Borders attributes as a location for film and TV production
- Encourage the growth of sport and culture events, home grown and international
- Enable our home grown talent by developing courses to help access new skills
- Work with our partners to formulate opportunities to grow the creative sector in the Scottish Borders.

**Culture and Tourism:** We will identify and work collaboratively with partners to develop potential employment and economic benefits in the Scottish Borders. We will do this through the following:

- Promoting the Borders Railway and venues in the Scottish Borders to create links and connections that will encourage visitors from Edinburgh and beyond to visit, stay and enjoy the Scottish Borders
- Working with partners to enhance the 'Scotland Starts Here' app, ensuring that there is an emphasis on activities and opportunities for people visiting the Scottish Borders and linking with local business to ensure they are involved
- Working with regional and national tourist organisations to ensure that the Scottish Borders is promoted more predominately as a location to visit and stay
- Developing a new culture and library strategy for the Scottish Borders to enhance the quality, variety and accessibility of the cultural experience across the region.

**Visitor Accommodation and Services:** We recognise the need to enhance the current provision for people who visit the Scottish Borders. We look to do this through the following:

- Enhancing and developing existing caravan parks and short-stay destinations in the Scottish Borders
- Working to attract hotel chains into the Scottish Borders
- Developing services provided for those on short-stop destinations, i.e. mountain biking and 'Aires' (serviced motorhome stops).

**Housing:** As an administration, we recognise that to grow the Scottish Borders, we need to build homes that support the needs and aspirations of people in the area. To do this, we must:

- Continue to support Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and developers to ensure we get more accessible and affordable housing for residents in the Scottish Borders
- Deliver on the priorities in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)
- Develop plans for additional traveller people sites in the Scottish Borders.

**Borders Railway Extension:** The administration is fully committed to extending the Borders Railway through Hawick and onto Carlisle. To ensure continued momentum on the project, we will:

- Create a working group to drive the project and feasibility study. The group will involve neighbouring councils, elected representatives, rail campaigners and other partners
- Interact with all levels of Government to meet the Scottish Borders' aims and aspirations to extend the railway to Hawick and onto Carlisle.

**Regional Deals:** As a critical partner in established regional growth deals, the Scottish Borders finds itself in a unique once-in-a-generation position of being able to source finance to support projects that will enhance the Scottish Borders. To ensure that we can maximise these opportunities, we will:

- Ensure that we are proactive in establishing the best possible outcomes from the regional growth deals
- Work with outside organisations to facilitate ideas and collaborate on potential opportunities from the growth deals.



# EMPOWERED, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

*Communities and neighbourhoods are what bring the Scottish Borders to life. That is why we want to help all our communities thrive. To do this, we will work with our communities, trusting them to carry out some services where they wish to and empowering them to shape and deliver local priorities for their neighbourhoods.*

**Community Empowerment:** We will ensure that community empowerment is at the heart of what we do. This administration recognises that placing trust in communities and empowering them is the key to the future success of the Scottish Borders. To make this happen, we will:

- Continue the 'place planning' process in communities
- Review the Area Partnerships and their role and responsibilities in terms of community involvement
- Strive to improve relationships with community councils through training and workshops
- Support communities in developing green space management and community spaces
- Ensure communities are consulted in advance before we finalise the capital and revenue programme
- Continue to support communities to help them fulfil their ambitions of viable and sustainable asset transfer bids.

**Traffic Management and Road Safety:** Ensuring the safety of pedestrians and road users in the Scottish Borders is one of our primary concerns. To help establish better practice, we will:

- Consult with communities to identify and implement solutions to address on-street parking issues in the Scottish Borders
- Examine the costs and benefits of decriminalising parking in the Scottish Borders, with the intention to decriminalise parking during this administration
- Increase the white lining programme
- Support anti-speeding initiatives such as 'community speed watch'.

**Public Transport:** This is essential in a rural region like the Scottish Borders. We must modernise and look at innovative ways to deliver transport in the area. To do this will:

- Develop a robust public transport strategy with the aim of reducing vehicle carbon emissions, improving health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation in our communities and improving transport connectivity between our communities.

**Crime Prevention and Community Safety:** The safety of the borders public is paramount to this administration. To ensure we are playing our part in ensuring the borders are a safer place to live and stay, we shall:

- Undertake a review of the effectiveness and value of the Community Action Teams (CAT)
- Engage with communities on the possible introduction of a council-led neighbourhood warden service and other initiatives, including additional Youth Work to help reduce anti-social behaviour
- Work with our IT provider, CGI, to introduce town centre Wi-Fi, which will allow for the introduction of secure, wireless CCTV systems in our town centres as part of our ongoing strategy to be a 'Smart Rural Region'
- Work with criminal justice so that the impact of those carrying out community payback orders is felt more positively in our communities and neighbourhoods.

**Grassroots Sports Facilities:** Sports pitches, grass areas and club facilities are vital for regional clubs and organisations. We must ensure that we support them by establishing a plan of maintenance. To do this, we will:

- Deliver a process and plan for an annual funding programme which develops and improves our 'grassroots' sports grounds and public amenities, ensuring they fit for purpose and are sustainable. We will use the existing play park improvement programme as a model to deliver this.

**Business Development and Town Teams:** Recognising the issues and opportunities in our border communities, we seek to partner with our towns and villages to deliver economic and community development. To do this, we shall:

- Establish economic development 'town teams' within the Scottish Borders to assist communities accessing grants and ensure we maximise all external funding opportunities
- Help local businesses by encouraging people to shop local through initiatives, e.g. the 'Scotland Loves Local' gift card
- Work with partners to ensure that business support grants are utilised when and where it is applicable.



# GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*We should be a region that maximises the benefits of healthy living and ensures that prevention and early intervention are at the top of our priorities for health and well-being. To make that happen, we need to create policies that help individuals live independent, healthy lives for as long as possible, focusing on mental and physical health and encouraging good diet, exercise and beneficial lifestyle choices.*

*We will work effectively with partners to drive new initiatives that place people's health and well-being at the heart of what we do. We will support those who are cared for in all settings and those with caring responsibilities.*

**Carers:** The social care issues throughout the country and the Scottish Borders that has left people unable to be discharged from hospital due to lack of care providers is an issue we must improve on. To achieve this we will:

- Create opportunities and career pathways in Health and Social Care
- Introduce new models of caregiving and invest in new facilities and technology that meets the needs of our population now and in the future
- Create incentives and packages of support for those looking to enter the care sector
- Co-produce models of care with our carers and those in receipt of care to assist people who need support so they have more opportunities for respite.

**Loneliness:** Living in a rural area, we recognise the benefits it can bring, but we are also aware that the Scottish Borders rural nature can exacerbate social issues like loneliness. As an administration, we will work to help prevent loneliness by:

- Increasing the awareness of social prescribing (connecting people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support)
- Working with groups to engage new volunteers
- Developing our community halls so they can deliver more diverse programmes and activities
- Looking at better forms of public transport between towns and villages in the Borders for late evening events.



**Sport and Physical Activity Strategy:** To ensure people in the Scottish Borders can live healthy, active lives while improving the health and mental well-being of people of all ages. We will:

- Develop and implement a new sports and physical activity strategy to enhance participation and create a more active Scottish Borders
- Enhance pathways for those wishing to excel in their chosen sport
- Work with partners and national government bodies to establish a working group to deliver the key outcomes from the strategy for the Scottish Borders
- Consult with sports groups and third-sector organisations to ensure we can deliver the strategy effectively.

**Anti-Poverty Strategy:** Delivering on the anti-poverty strategy is fundamental to ensuring that we tackle deprivation in the Scottish Borders. To make this happen, we will:

- Ensure that the ethos of our anti-poverty strategy and work is at the heart of everything we do internally and with our partners
- Work on minimising the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on household budgets by utilising initiatives created through our anti-poverty action group
- Continue to encourage employers to become accredited real living wage employers with good employment practices through our contracts and service level agreements and our work on promoting the real living wage.

**The Promise:** Scotland's promise to care for care-experienced children and young people is that they will grow up loved, safe, and respected. To ensure that we deliver on The Promise, we will:

- Lead the delivery of 'The Promise' in the Scottish Borders on a multi-agency basis, involving those with lived care-experience to help redesign services
- Shift the balance for care towards an early and effective intervention that improves outcomes and life chances for children, young people and their families.

**Play and Activity:** The administration recognises the value of outdoor play and activity. It is a vital tool in encouraging imagination and creativity while also helping increase activity levels. To ensure that the Scottish Borders is in a position to continue its leading work in this area, we will:

- Continue to invest in new outdoor play, education and recreation spaces within our public parks and schools, ensuring communities have access to high-quality play and physical activity opportunities.



# CLEAN GREEN FUTURE

*Tackling the issue of climate change is a priority for this administration. We want to ensure we utilise our natural resources more efficiently while continuing to deliver excellent recycling rates throughout the Scottish Borders.*

**Recycling:** We will continue to deliver actions that maintain the position of the Scottish Borders as a top recycling region, diverting the amount of refuse going to landfills. We will work to establish more community-driven recycling initiatives by:

- Helping communities develop repair shops with organisations such as the men's shed
- Working with local volunteers to establish crafting workshops to utilise used items such as glass bottles and return them to everyday use items.

**Scanning technology:** Data and technology are vital to drive innovation and deliver service efficiency. As an administration we will:

- Invest in technology that helps increase the opportunity to provide data on the performance of our service efficiency. For example, look at the technology that allows our refuse collection fleet to provide regular feedback on the condition of the road network
- Invest in technology which will help promote a better refuse collection service and reduce the amount of missed bins.

**Renewable Energy:** We will continue to work to reduce energy consumption and explore opportunities to use our natural resources better to meet energy needs for the council and our communities. We will do this by:

- Working with partners to deliver green forms of energy, including the potential for solar, wind and hydropower using our coastal resources, land and waterways.



# WORKING TOGETHER - IMPROVING LIVES

*As a rural region, we need to ensure we are digitally enabled and that technology is used effectively to bring people together and enhance our efficiency as a council.*

**Smart Rural Region:** Innovation and reduced time on administrative work are essential to increasing productivity which will deliver better results for the Scottish Borders. To help make this happen we will:

- Continue to invest in new innovative technology through our contract with our IT provider, CGI. Helping us to improve the Council's performance, assist us in engaging effectively with local people, businesses and our community planning partners and realise our vision that the Scottish Borders is a 'smart digital' rural region.

All members of the Scottish Borders Council administration are committed to the vision, goals and strategies that have been laid out in this Administration Policy Plan. We are committed to planning and collaborative working required to achieve the outcomes within the term of this administration. We acknowledge the contributions and expectations of each member of the administration and the communities we serve.

## **Scottish Borders Council**

**Leader** Councillor Euan Jardine

**Deputy Leader** Councillor Scott Hamilton

**Convenor** Councillor Watson McAteer

**Leader of Independent Group** Councillor Robin Tatler

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