
SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

21 February 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with a final working draft of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy.
- 1.2 The first Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan included a commitment to “Develop a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Destination and Marketing Strategy” under the theme of Cultural and Creative Excellence, Action 4 (C).
- 1.3 All five of the key agencies in the South of Scotland, including Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, South of Scotland Destination Alliance, and VisitScotland have been collaborating to support the development of a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland.
- 1.4 The report reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract more visitors and increase market value.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Council:

- (a) Endorses the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy, and;**
- (b) Recognises the potential of the South of Scotland to contribute to the successful delivery of the National Tourism Strategy “Scotland Outlook 2030” and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.**

3 SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY

- 3.1 All five of the key agencies in the South of Scotland, including Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), and VisitScotland have been collaborating to support the development of a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland.
- 3.2 The creation of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy has been an inclusive process with a wide range of consultation exercises to ensure buy-in across key agencies, stakeholders, tourism businesses and communities.
- 3.3 In addition to the five key partners, an Advisory Group was formed to offer guidance and challenge the agencies at key milestones throughout the process. The Advisory Group included a range of national partners with a regional interest and key business leaders from across the visitor economy in the south.
- 3.4 As part of the process, the strategy partners held consultations around potential themes and content for the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy. The strategy has been written based on consultation with;
 - Strategy Advisory Group
 - South of Scotland Destination Alliance Board
 - 14 local area meetings – led by SSDA
 - 13 thematic / sectoral meetings – led by SSDA
 - Online survey
 - Visitor feedback – VisitScotland social listening tool
 - 1 to 1 digital meetings with stakeholders
 - South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership
- 3.5 From the 14 local area meetings, 3500 data contributions were made to the development of the strategy with strong feedback that the process has been inclusive, transparent, and fair and that consultation participants feel their views are represented. This work has contributed to the creation of a strategy document and associated draft implementation plan which will be launched at the South of Scotland Destination Alliance Conference on the 20th March 2024. This strategy translates the National Shared Vision, Outlook 2030 for the needs and opportunities of the South of Scotland, recognising that the visitor economy is a huge area of opportunity for the South and the Scottish Borders.
- 3.6 Council is asked to endorse the final working draft Responsible Tourism Strategy (Appendix 1) before its official launch next month.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract visitors and increase market value. An implementation plan is currently being developed to ensure strategic outcomes are delivered and details of this, highlighting specific financial implications, will be reported to Members as details become available.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) Tourism is a priority for Scottish Borders Council and a South of Scotland wide strategy will focus on developing the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand. Tourism is a key contributor to Scotland's socio-economic landscape creating jobs, sustaining communities and enhancing wellbeing for visitors.
- b) Competition from other regions in Scotland and the UK means that the public and private sector need to work effectively together to ensure the South of Scotland and the Scottish Borders is a leading visitor destination. There is a risk that if the Council does not support tourism development, economic, environmental and social benefits will not be realised.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

A key aspect of Scottish Borders Council's work in relation to Economic Development is to reduce inequality and help to promote sustainable, inclusive economic growth. The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy will ensure the tourism sector incorporates socially and environmentally responsible decision making, balanced with providing economic benefits and helping to sustain communities and where applicable support local supply chains and the circular economy.

4.4 Sustainable Development Goals

The Responsible Tourism Strategy contributes to Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 8; Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 11; Sustainable Cities and Communities.

4.5 Climate Change

The South of Scotland Tourism industry 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 support a Just Transition to Net Zero by 2045. Tourism business will be required to reduce emissions and champion environmental sustainability across the industry and where practical have responsibility as a core theme.

4.6 Rural Proofing

The report highlights the intention of the South of Scotland to expand the value of tourism thereby providing rural communities with more opportunities from increased visitor numbers and economic activity that will have a positive impact on all areas of the Scottish Borders.

4.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

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

4.8 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.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Director of Finance and Procurement, the Director of Corporate Governance, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director of People Performance & Change, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted on this report. Comments received have been incorporated into the final version of the report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig **Director of Resilient Communities**

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Economic Development Update, 11 January 2024

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

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