
SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Report by Director of Resilient Communities

Executive Committee

16 April 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with a copy of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan. This Action Plan supports the South of Scotland strategy, launched on 20th March 2024 (Appendix 1) which has been welcomed and endorsed by the Convention of the South of Scotland, with Scottish Government ministerial and multi public agency commitment to key actions. These actions are set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The first Regional Economic Strategy included a commitment to “Develop a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Destination and Marketing Strategy” which the Action Plan supports 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 the Action Plan to deliver a single Responsible Tourism Destination Development Strategy for the South of Scotland.
- 1.4 The Strategy and Action Plan 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 Executive:**
 - (a) **Endorses the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan, and;**
 - (b) **Continues to recognise 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 ACTION PLAN

- 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 and a supporting Action Plan. The Strategy was endorsed by Scottish Borders Council on 21st February 2024, in advance of its launch on 20th March 2024.
- 3.2 The creation of the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 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 and Action Plan, including local area meetings, online surveys and visitor feedback. This strategy translates the National Shared Vision, Outlook 2030 for the needs and opportunities of the South of Scotland, recognising the visitor economy is a huge area of opportunity for the South and the Scottish Borders.
- 3.5 The 22 areas of work within the strategy reflect the four Ambitions for Growth (Inspire, Develop, Support and Responsible), which are fixed for the next ten years. The Action Plan scopes out an initial three-year (2024-27) period, each of the 109 identified actions also states which organisation has lead responsibility for delivery and which others are supporting; how these actions will be delivered and what indicative timescales will be followed. This is a dynamic document, with actions evolving based on feedback and the changing business landscape.
- 3.6 The action plan will be delivered in partnership with the industry within existing approved budgets and will be used to attract external funding and new investment where appropriate into the South of Scotland.
- 3.7 Executive is asked to endorse the Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 2).

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 **Financial**

The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy Action Plan reflects the high level of ambition in the South of Scotland to grow the tourism sector, attract new visitors and increase market value by growing the visitor economy. The Action Plan will be delivered within existing approved budgets and using external funding opportunities as these arise.

4.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

Tourism is a priority for Scottish Borders Council and a South of Scotland wide strategy and Action Plan 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.

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 and Action Plan 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 and Action Plan 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 are being consulted on this report. Comments received will be incorporated into the final version of the report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig
Director of Resilient Communities

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jane Warcup	Principal Officer – Economic Development
Graeme Johnstone	Place and Enterprise Manager – Economic Development
Sam Smith	Chief Officer – Economic Development

Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 21 February 2024

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

Contact us at jwarcup@scotborders.gov.uk