

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 10 MAY 2016

Economic Development Update

1. Business:

- For the 3-month period from 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2016 the Business Gateway team assisted **77 business start-ups**, of which 9 have the potential to be high growth. The advisers have delivered 23 start-up workshops and 26 Growth workshops with 273 attendees.
- During the period **four Start-up workshops** were held in Peebles, Hawick and Kelso with a total 80 attendees.
- Business Gateway worked with Lyber 2016 Ltd to assist with the part purchase of **Hawick Knitwear**. This has secured temporary premises and new jobs for around 40 employees from the failed company. Business Gateway was involved in formulating the initial Hawick Action Plan, developed in response to the Hawick Knitwear redundancies.
- Business Gateway Advisers have continued to work with businesses in Hawick and Jedburgh that have been **affected by the flooding**, working with colleagues across the Council to ensure they obtain grant funding and return to normal operations as soon as possible.
- In 2015-16, the **Scottish Borders Business Fund** received 43 applications and approved 37 grants valued at £107,960.65 supporting projects with a value of £243,947.02. These projects are forecast **to create 43 jobs and safeguard 57.5 jobs** with a forecast **economic impact of £953,745 GVA**.
- The **Scottish Borders Business Loan Fund** offers loans of between £1,000 and £20,000 over terms of up to three years. In 2015-16, the Loan Fund received 11 applications and approved 7 loans valued at £129,504. These loans are forecast **to create 12.5 jobs and safeguard 29 jobs** with a forecast **economic impact of £393,420 GVA**.
- **Property** – 185 property enquiries were received in 2015/16 which resulted in 35 new property leases which in turn will generate £165k in annual rental income. The current occupancy level is **93%** for the portfolio of industrial units, yards, offices and shops. Three offices of four have been let at the Horsemarket Business Hub, Kelso, and four offices have now been let at Waverley Chambers, Galashiels Transport Interchange.
- **Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive - SERI Scheme** – The Scottish Government has confirmed funding for the SERI Scheme in 2016/17. The Scheme was relaunched on 1 April and is targeted at those furthest from the workplace. Eight additional places are available for the Scottish Borders and Barnardo's Works has been contracted to deliver this support.

2. Regeneration:

- **Galashiels Town Centre**
 - The **Borders Railway Ambassadors Pilot** has been extended into the 2016 season. A weekend service will be provided in April, Fridays will be added for May and June, whilst Thursdays will also be covered in July and August. The service then tapers off into the autumn and finishes at the end of October.
 - Pedestrian **signage** proposals were taken to the Galashiels Road User Consultation Group with installation now expected mid-May 2016.
 - **Research** into the retail, leisure and office property sectors is underway and will involve approaching operators that are considered inward investment prospects for Galashiels.
 - **Events** - support is being given to the National Archaeology conference in Galashiels on 28 May 2016 and the forthcoming visit of the Flying Scotsman.
 - **Marketing** – support is being given to Energise Galashiels to refine the marketing offer of the town, particularly online. The shoppers map is close to completion following a slight delay. The Council has provided a grant to the Chamber of Trade to support this project.
 - **Footfall** – a footfall counter has been installed on Douglas Bridge to help record pedestrian movements and understand them over time.
 - Town Centre **Vacancies** – monitoring at the quarter end shows a decline in vacancies from 40 in Sep 2015 to 34 in March 2016. Looking solely at Channel Street and Douglas Bridge, the figure has dropped from 16 to 13 vacant units.

- **Selkirk Business Improvement District (BIDS)** – The Steering Group has appointed a new Project Manager, who is currently progressing the business plan development and consultation processes. A revised timescales for the BIDS ballot process has been identified, with the ballots now scheduled for November 2016.

- **Selkirk Town Centre Streetscape Project** – Led by Council Engineers, an initial consultation group has been established to represent various groups, businesses and stakeholders in the town. The group will agree key objectives for the scheme and progress with design options for a revised town centre streetscape.

- **Selkirk CARS Project**
 - Over 70 enquiries have been received seeking information on Selkirk CARS funded grant repairs.
 - 44 grant offers have been issued for repairs to traditional buildings (Priority Buildings and General Repairs) totalling £307,560, supporting 28 properties.
 - An additional £70,000 of funding has been secured from Historic Environment Scotland to support traditional building repairs projects.
 - The design team has been appointed for the phase 1 repairs to the Sir Walter Scott's Courthouse. Estimated site start Sept 2016.
 - 75 Educational events have been organised by Selkirk CARS with over 2,100 people attending.
 - Partnership working and cross funding has been achieved with SBC Archaeologist for a ground penetrating radar survey of Auld Kirk.
 - Support for the development of projects for the national 'Year of Innovation Architecture & Design' and Festival of Architecture 2016 is being provided, with an event being run at The Haining later in the year.

3. Tourism & Events

• Tourism support –

- Tourism Officers and Business Gateway Officers from Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils attended EXPO in April 2016 for appointments with 42 International Tour Operators from countries interested in hosting tours in the Scottish Borders. There were enquiries from the US, Canada, India, China, Russia and the Emirates. Officers also met with UK operators who had already created Borders Railway itineraries which were scheduled to be on sale from September 2016 for Summer 2017.
- Timetabling of the Steam train service in August and September 2016 is being finalised by ScotRail. Businesses have been informed of the approximate timings of the trains to develop products and packages for passengers during visits. This information has been promoted via the Area Tourism Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and 'Our Borderland' group. Business engagement has begun in Melrose, Galashiels and Kelso for the arrival of the Flying Scotsman on Sunday 15 May 2016.
- The new walking site www.walkscottishborders.com is now live. This is the sister site to www.cyclescottishborders.com which has been running since 2012. Both sites are now 'mobile friendly' and are available for use by businesses wishing to link to the cycle and walk network or by visitors requiring access to route information and visitor information on tablets and mobile phones.
- A partnership of Midlothian and Scottish Borders tourism groups has applied to the Scottish Enterprise Tourism Innovation Fund to develop a collaborative project around the Railway. The expression of interest was submitted on 15 April and a decision will be made in May 2016. The project will be led by the Midlothian Tourism Partnership with the Scottish Borders Area Tourism Partnership in the chair.

• Event support –

- A Scottish Borders Tourism Cycling Strategy is being developed by Council officers and this will be consulted on with a wide range of stakeholders within the cycling and tourism sector. The strategy will aim to review activity and look at opportunities using cycling tourism and events as a means to increase economic benefit to the Scottish Borders. It will provide an action plan to ensure the area maintains its position as a key cycling destination for both 'on' and 'off' road.
- Existing events which have been supported;
 - Border Counties Rally - the group is developing crowd spectator areas and will approach EventScotland for event funding in 2017.
 - Melrose Rugby Sevens was supported for marketing activities promoting train travel to this year's event, capturing the Edinburgh market.
 - Riverside Rock Festival, Jedburgh - to increase crowd numbers and support them in a bid to EventScotland for additional marketing funding.

- Hillside Outside run a number of cycling events which are growing year on year, currently they are receiving support for Tweedlove and Tour 'o the Borders
- Development support for new events is being provided, including Race the Train, a new event for 2017. Two new events for 2016 – 'Fonduro' & 'Grinduro' - will compliment Hillside Outside's current events calendar in the Tweeddale area.
- Event management at Tweedbank to compliment the Flying Scotsman Train visit and support for associated events taking place in Galashiels on the day.
- The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) is currently supporting 49 individual events in the Scottish Borders.

4. Funding:

- The **LEADER Programme** is now open, with application deadlines set for 31 May and 31 August 2016. The Programme Coordinator and Facilitator are continuing to work with a range of potential applicants.
- The new **Forth Fisheries Local Action Group**, covering the Scottish Borders, East Lothian and Fife, has received a funding allocation of just over £1m for the period 2014 – 2020. The new Action Group will make recommendations on European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) local development applications. Scottish Borders Council is the lead partner for the three areas and has employed an EMFF Programme Coordinator, based in Eyemouth, to support the development of projects, and applications to the fund, from groups and businesses across the whole FLAG area.

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