

Scottish Borders Tourism Action Plan 2017

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PROVIDING AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Nature, Heritage and Activities

Aims

- Capitalise on the opportunities offered by our inherent assets.
- Enhance the product offering and optimise the benefits to be gained from these key assets.
- Encourage responsible custodianship of the Region's built and natural environment, scenic and wildlife assets by supporting government, local government, agencies, land owners and managers to manage and protect the Region's landscape and wildlife assets in a manner that maintains and improves the qualities of beauty, remoteness, wildness, peace and tranquility. Inculcate a mutual understanding by all of the Economic Value of Landscape to the Region's Tourist Industry.

Nature

Wildlife and Nature - Develop wildlife and nature products/ packages to capitalise on growing national interest - e.g. wildlife watching – Ospreys / Sealife, etc.

Actions

1. Liaise with VS regarding a library of images for use by sector. **January 2017**
2. Improve processes for the audit and inventory of all assets. **April 2017**
3. Create Explore for the Day collateral during **MBTAG project**
4. improve nature product replicating success Wild Season in D&G under guardianship of SUP **April 2017**

Champion/Lead Southern Upland Partnership, VS - Marketing, SBTP, SBC, MBTAG

Heritage

Focus on Visitor Attractions – Continue to develop and improve the offering and quality of key attractions and gardens as strategic ‘pull’ factors for tourist visitors to the area (Cross-reference with nature assets). Support Abbotsford and similar projects to ensure full potential is realised.

Actions

1. Attendance at Exhibitions **Ongoing**
2. Support local heritage festivals through awareness raising and promotion **Current**
3. Support YIAD and YHHA years of focus through calendar of events **Current**
4. Explore idea of a “Tea Trail” **April 2017**

Champion/Lead Big Houses Group, Scottish Borders Heritage Forum

Ancestral Tourism

Capitalise on the growing market of root seekers, promoting the Borders as a place where it is easy to uncover and visit their heritage.

Actions

1. Raise awareness in the accommodation sector of the unique resources of the Borders Heritage Hub in Hawick
2. Increase visibility of the Borders Family History Society and its analysis of Border graveyards
3. Encourage and support clan and family gatherings and increase awareness of the Clan Event Fund
4. Double the number of members of the relaunched Ancestral Welcome Scheme in the Borders by April 2017 (currently only 16)
5. Develop PR stories of happy root seekers in the Borders aiming to have one in at least every second VS ancestral newsletter **Champion/Lead** – Alistair Cunningham (SBTP) and Borders Ancestral Tourism Group

Arts Culture and Textiles

Live Borders

Actions

- 1.

Cycling

This sector is a significant revenue generator for the Scottish Borders. Build on current successes of mountain-biking assets and expand wider road and leisure cycling (See Events Strategy, Cycling Strategy and widening of markets).

Actions

1. Engage with consumer marketing activity to promote Tweedlove, Tour of Britain & Tour o' the Borders Sportive **September 2017**
2. Identify opportunities to showcase our product at UK & International Consumer Bike Shows. **Ongoing**
3. Attract International Biking Conference to the Scottish Borders **November 2017**
4. Identify Scottish Borders International Cycling Ambassador through VS who can be used in campaign content. **April 2017**
5. Work in partnership with SBC to deliver the Cycling Strategy 2016 **January 2017**
6. Liaise with SBVN on their Cross Border Cycling project with Northumberland **April 2017**
7. **Live Borders**

Champion/Lead

SBC /VS/ FCS/SBTP

Walking

Ensure a high quality of infrastructure, support services and information are available for walkers. (Where appropriate develop 'packages', improve integration and cooperative working).

Annual Activities

1. Soft launch of www.walkscottishborders.com **January 2017**
2. Establish a representative of the SBTP on the SBC access forum - this looks at the whole of the Scottish Borders as a geographical offering and can feed into the consumer marketing collateral and marketing strategy **January 2017**
3. Consumer marketing campaign to deliver two key objectives – 1. Promote the annual walking festival. 2. Generally promote the Scottish Borders and the walking routes to specific consumer market segments including packages on long distance walk routes. **August 2017**
4. Investigate development of an Industry toolkit to help businesses utilise walking & the annual walking festival as a motivator to attract new business to the Scottish Borders. **April 2017**

Champion/Lead SBC /Scottish Borders Walking Festival/SBC Rangers Service

Golf

Expand the golf market – tackle new markets and innovative product packaging and cooperative working (see marketing section).

Annual Activities

1. Investigate if the Scottish Borders Golf Tourism Association is still active. **January 2017**
2. Investigate what new Golf packaging products are available in the rest of Scotland that could be rolled out in SB **July 2017**

Champion/Lead SBTP /VS /SE (Gordon Todd)

Fishing / Country Sports

Enhance and increase awareness of destinations current offering and integration with wider destination product offering (packaging, etc).

Annual Activities

1. Development of local strategy to maximize yield of Scottish Country Sports market from UK & International consumers **TBC**
2. Recruit a Country Sports representative for SBTP **April 2017**
3. Include simulated shooting product into promoted packages **TBC**

Champion/Lead

TBC

Diving & Surfing

Further develop local diving clusters (Packages – Eyemouth and St Abbs).

Actions

1. Continue to support the BDTA and refresh the Dive Tourism Strategy which was created by Bright Light Marketing. **Ongoing**
2. Attendance at UK Dive Shows including London & Birmingham **Ongoing**
3. Overhaul of Consumer facing websites to now include overnight packages **April 2017**
4. Attendance at European Dive Shows (Holland & Germany) to promote the Scottish Borders Coastline and region to the Diving Community **Ongoing**
5. Increase level of awareness of Surf product on East Coast **July 2017**

Champion/Lead

BDTA/SBC

Equestrian

Utilise current profile in equestrian market to support the area's drive from higher position and penetration of the activities market, see links with equestrian events and riding for the disabled.

Promote the benefits of the countryside through improving access to it so people can fully appreciate the countryside heritage, peace and tranquility

Actions

1. Promotion of Bridleways in the Scottish Borders **TBC**
2. Promote Common Ridings and Festivals to visitors using www.returntotheridings.co.uk This action relies on Common Riding associations submitting their annual dates and information to the web developer through SBC. **February 2017**

Champion/Lead

SBC/Common Riding Associations

Other Sports

Support Activity aimed at providing 'product' and reasons for visit to the region e.g. events, participation in Rugby, etc.

Actions

1. SBC Events Strategy officer to outline pipeline of events for future years **December 2017**
2. Investigate the tourism potential in relation to other sports including Rugby, Body Boarding etc **August 2017**

Champion/Lead

SBC Events Officer

Destinations, Towns and Villages

Aims

Develop and improve vibrancy of key settlements within The Borders by protecting the built and natural heritage of our towns and villages
See links to other strategic initiatives and aspirations identified in the Rural Development Plan and Economic Blue Print for the Scottish Borders.
(Whole Towns Programme). Enhance Architectural Assets / Streetscapes, Retail offering (See links to Improving the Customer Journey

Actions

1. Investigate if "Our Scottish Borders" brand can be re-activated for use by the industry **Current**
2. Support our Town Centre group – "Destination Scottish Borders" **Ongoing**
3. SBTP to seek report from Sekirk pop up shop project to investigate a roll out to other areas **January 2017**
4. Bid Fund Opportunities to be investigated for rural towns & villages **Ongoing**
5. Link up towns to promote each other during busy times of the year e.g. Christmas **Ongoing**
6. SBC to link into regeneration funding opportunities whenever they become available. **Ongoing**
7. **Live Borders**

Champion/Lead

SBC/Destination Scottish Borders/SBTP

Events and Festivals

Aims

Maximise the opportunities to be gained in raising and improving destination profile, awareness, market penetration and economic benefit using events, etc as a vehicle for change.

Develop a current up-to-date Events and Festivals Programme / Strategy and Action Plan.

Use events and festivals to strengthen profile and awareness of inherent products e.g. heritage, nature, activities, etc.

Ensure up-to-date information available to consumers.

Actions

1. SBC to continue to work with Event Scotland, however a re-fresh of the Events Strategy is required in 2017. SBTP to be consultee on this re-fresh. **October 2017**
2. Industry to use events as hook to attract visitors to the region throughout the year **Ongoing**
3. Create Scottish Borders wide event calendar for the region. Consumer facing with functionality that industry can draw down from and upload to. SBTP to liaise with Live Borders, Border Events, VS and the List to see if there is an option to combine calendars **August 2017**
4. VS "How to load your events" operational procedures to be distributed to sector reps and industry partners to ensure all events are loaded. **March 2017**

Champion/Lead

SBC Events Officer & EventScotland /Live Borders

Business Tourism

Aims

Specifically Conferences / Team Building Sectors

See links to improvements within hospitality accommodation sector and the activities and outdoors sector as location for conferences / meetings and teambuilding

Actions

1. Creation of an online Bid portal via Convention Scotland national site. **March 2017**
2. Develop a Business Tourism Ambassador Programme. SBTP to liaise with the BG rep on possibilities. **March 2017**
3. Bid for International Meetings which highlight the regions strongest assets **Ongoing**
4. Continue to support development applications through planning that show potential for conference space. **Ongoing**
5. Continue to engage with SBCC regarding business initiatives and attend the Scottish Borders Business Forum once per quarter. **Ongoing**

Champion/Lead

SBTP, SBC, SE Business Gateway/Blueprint

Improving the Customer Journey

Food and Drink

Aims

Ensure visitor dining offer capitalises on the excellent provenance of the Region's food and drink.

Link with Scotland's Food and Drink and other national Strategies – see national initiatives and local events strategy.

Ensure our hospitality skills are of international standard and quality ('Capabilities' Initiatives

Actions

1. Continue to fund 10 local food and drink candidates for Scotland Food & Drink Mentor programme. Ongoing
2. Bid for International Meetings which highlight the regions strongest assets Ongoing (Angus world forum in 2017)
3. Work with other events to ensure promotion of local produce at every opportunity. Ongoing
4. Develop an Enterprise facilitator through LEADER program TBC (Brexit)

Champion/Lead SBFN/SBTP/SBC/VS

Transport

Aims

Create sustainable, easy, cost effective transport links and routes to and around Scottish Borders

Support Regional, and where appropriate, national transport development initiatives and raise awareness of existing sustainable transport links to and around the Region. (See Borders Rail Link, cycle / walking infrastructure and public transport routes).

Promote A1, A68 & A7 corridors as major 'gateways' into the Region

Actions

1. Continue to work in partnership across all Borders Railway activity. **Ongoing**
2. Establish if a Visitor Survey by VisitScotland to identify consumer satisfaction levels is being conducted. **March 2017**
3. Liaise with Campaign for Borders Railway to ensure co-ordinated response to Railway from attractions and accommodation providers for phase 2 to Carlisle of the Borders Railway **Ongoing**
4. Continue to attend EXPO as part of the Borders Railway team. **Current**

Champion/Lead

SBTP & SBC

Accommodation

Aims

Ensure the Region's accommodation offerings are in direct relation to consumer demands and where opportunities are available can act as an attractor of demand in themselves. Ensure that all new developments for the Tourism industry are passed through Economic Development and where appropriate through the SBTP during the consultation period for comment.

Ensure a relevant range of types of accommodation is available across the Region to meet evolving market demand and expectations. Identify opportunities where better quality and new products can 'lead' and generate new demand – accommodation destination products

Actions

1. SBTP to continue to be represented on SBC Borders Railway Group and in SE Tourism Development fund **Ongoing**
2. SBTP to be consulted and provide input to cross-borders signage. **Ongoing**
3. Establish if a Visitor Survey by VisitScotland to identify consumer satisfaction levels is being conducted. **MBTAG Project**
4. Liaise with Campaign for Borders Railway to ensure co-ordinated response to Railway from attractions and accommodation providers **Ongoing**
5. SBTP Hotels rep to coordinate with other Scottish Borders hoteliers to discuss the pivotal role they can play in operating as attractors and the economic impact this could have on the wider Scottish Borders. **March 2017 at conference?**
6. **Continue to comment on potential tourism development applications in both urban and rural environments through the planning consultation system.**
7. Other points of note **Ongoing**
 - a. Skills & Availability needs to be addressed.
 - b. SBTP to continue to work on the Glentress Masterplan consultation
 - c. Develop innovation in accommodation sector.
 - d. Investigate diversifying accommodation offer.
 - e. S.E.O – How is accommodation found
 - f. Accessible Tourism – what are the benefits

Champion/Lead

SBTP/VS/SBC/Business Gateway/MBTAG

Digital Connectivity

Aims

Encourage Borders wide adoption of the digital age and tools available.

Support / Lobby for improved digital connectivity within the Region. (See Wi-Fi Hotspots). In parallel see the destination's and individual businesses' dialogue with their markets.

'Connectivity' and its implications for Marketing / packaging / IT skills and see all new communication routes with / to visitors – social media, Trip Advisor, etc.

Actions

1. SBTP to remain informed of roll out schedule for fast speed broadband and ensure that online presence is promoted across all industry operators **Ongoing**
2. SBTP to obtain an update from Douglas Scott - SBC **January 2017**

Champion/Lead

SBC/ Business Gateway/VS/ SBTP

Our Capabilities

Leadership and Collaboration

Aims

Ensure strong, enlightened, informed and innovative leadership and collaboration exists across the tourism sector.

Action

1. Review on an ongoing basis structures, roles and responsibilities within the Borders tourism sector to ensure relevance, best practices and successes are being achieved. **Ongoing**
2. Ensure a clear communications strategy exists internally across the sector so that goals, aspirations, and successes are articulated and lead to a joined up / signed up collaborative sector working together for the common good **MBTAG Project**
3. Explore the implication for business from Brexit in the Scottish Borders and access to funding after exit from EU **March 2017**
4. Investigate funding models and operational capabilities within 3 different SBTP models including Geography/Placed based approach as well as sectoral representation **April 2017**

Champion/Lead

SBTP/MBTAG

Quality and Skills

Aims

Ensure all our tourism people / workforce and management have the relevant skills base to provide commercially successful, quality customer-focused services and products of international standing.

Actions

1. Roll out World Host programme through SE Tourism Development project **MBTAG project/December 2017**
2. Enhance professional business skills and practices amongst local tourism service providers and businesses particularly new start-ups – promote benefits to businesses through collaborative working **Ongoing**
3. Identify Customer Service and Vocational Skills programme **MBTAG project**
4. Explore and exploit closer links and skills development opportunities between College and local businesses **September 2017**
5. Industry to have access to Social Media and marketing coaching for new businesses and start ups **Ongoing**
6. SBTP to broker liaison with High Schools and Colleges and industry to progress the skills development agenda **Ongoing**
7. SBTP to champion a “celebrating success” awards for employees and businesses. **March 2017**

Champion/Lead

Business Gateway
/SBTP/Volunteer Centre Borders /MBTAG

Marketing

Aims

Make best use of knowledge about our potential visitors and markets to ensure we are successful and achieve above our share of the market by continuing to provide quality products and services at least in line with, if not exceeding, their aspirations and expectations by:

- Understanding our Markets
- Be fully aware and constantly updated of market trends and evolving expectations and needs of each sector of the market that offer opportunities to Scottish Borders. (Market and Product Trends via competitor destinations). Continue to collate and monitor consumer perceptions and feedback on the destination offering to inform ongoing alignment of the Borders' offering / visitor interests / demands and trends.
- Market Intelligence – Measuring Our Performance Continued to collate market data and economic performance data, e.g. occupancy surveys, Visitor Attraction numbers, etc to monitor our success in meeting market expectations and our own targets.
- Maximise Marketing / Promotional Opportunities:
- Optimise benefits to be achieved from marketing and promotion to key VS market segments. Key themes to include Activities, Food and Drink, Nature and key destination settlements, etc.
- Increase private sector marketing leverage to complement Public Sector initiatives and marketing activities, spend etc.
- Encourage private businesses to and develop and carry out improved marketing and packaging and joint promotions.
- Scottish Borders Council to continue to support VisitScotland initiatives through their MOA.

Actions

1. Explore and Secure industry support to Attend Expo and similar exhibitions to promote the Scottish Borders **Ongoing**
2. Work with groups to bring them into the SBTP to encourage collaborative working and potential growth fund applications **September 2017**
3. Review of International Marketing Opportunities connected to the Borders Railway. Potential for “partnership” marketing opportunities from those destinations. **Ongoing**
4. Review of International Marketing Opportunities linked to Ferry Terminals. Potential for “partnership” marketing from those destinations. **August 2017**
5. Quarterly Tourism Feature with local Scottish Borders Media **Ongoing**
6. Establishment of a Local Marketing Interest Group for the Scottish Borders **TBC**
7. Secure consultation between SBTP and VS on local marketing planning in Spring each year. **Ongoing**
8. Consult with VS regarding image library and event calendar for use by businesses. **Current**

Champion/Lead

VS/SBC/SBTP

Sustainable Tourism

Aims

To be good environmentally and socially aware citizens, neighbours and participants in green strategies.

Encourage best practice in all Scottish Borders tourism businesses. Ensure we are: 'people'-oriented, following best employment practices; are green, minimising our impact on the environment; and are aware of our role in the life of our communities. **This action is to be replicated under all other actions in the document underlining its importance.**

Action

Keep informed of Low Carbon Officer activity. **Ongoing**

Champion/Lead

VS SBFN/Business Gateway/SBC Low Carbon Officer

Accessible Tourism

Aims

Encourage Best Practice in all Scottish Borders tourism businesses. Ensure that case studies and equality legislation is understood and implemented to allow for increase in accessible tourism opportunities. **This action is to be replicated under all other actions in the document underlining its importance.**

Action

Explore demand for Accessible Tourism Workshops for Scottish Borders tourism businesses. **March 2017**

Champion/Lead VS/Business Gateway