

MINUTE OF MEETING

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE – BOARD MEETING 28 JANUARY 2021 – BY MICROSOFT TEAMS

<p>Board Professor Russel Griggs OBE (Chair) Alistair Cameron Alan Daubney Helen Forsyth Duncan McConchie Lindsay McDowell Kate Rowell Hazel Smith David Sulman Professor Sara Carter</p> <p>Apologies Jeremy Sainsbury Nick Halfhide</p>	<p>SOSE Senior Leadership Team Anthony Daye, Director of Finance John Evans, Director of Enabling Services Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy Bryan McGrath, Director of Operations</p> <p>SOSE Attendees Tracey Graham, Communications and Marketing Manager Susan Cannon, SOSE Corporate Office Alan Manthorpe, SOSE Corporate Office Garry Legg, Strategy and Planning Manager – Item 2 only Phillip Robinson, Business Development Specialist – Item 5 only Kate Dagg – Item 14 only Neil MacGregor – Item 14 only</p> <p>Guests Scottish Government Official - Regional Economic Development Division Scottish Government Official – Regional Economic Development Division Scottish Government Official – Regional Economic Development Division</p> <p>Consultant – RSM – Item 2 only Consultant – RSM – Item 2 only</p> <p>Project Manager – Scottish Cycling – Item 14 only Project Manager – Scottish Cycling – Item 14 only</p>
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WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

1. Russel Griggs, Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

2. Consultants from RSM Consulting, joined the meeting for this item. Gary Legg, Strategy & Planning Manager began with a presentation on the background to the Regional Economic Strategy, and RSM followed with a presentation on their initial findings from its early work. The Board discussed the initial findings and the following key points were noted:
 - The challenging timetable was highlighted with reflections on the difficulty in consulting with businesses and third sector organisations in current circumstances. The plan was

being developed at pace, but the timetable was required to enable other strategies to align, including SOSE's action plan. The work was building on a strong existing base of evidence.

- Finding ways of effective engagement with young people was important, and again there were challenges given the current climate.
- The RES needed to be owned by SOS. Our economy was different and comparison with the central belt were not relevant and there would be more value in looking at other rural regions both within Scotland and further afield were suggested.
- It was important to take a wider definition of enabling infrastructure, including digital connectivity and support such as childcare to demonstrate the contribution to creating an inclusive economy.
- There was value in exploring how to increase vocational training opportunities to ensure there were opportunities for all. We saw young people leaving to go to university outwith the area, with research showing a greater than average drop-out rate due to caring/family responsibility.
- The strategy needed to recognise the value of all who contributed to the economy.
- The natural capital of the SOS represented a valuable resource for future success
- Agriculture remained important to the SOS and one key issue was succession planning for farmers.
- There were opportunities in the forestry sector to provide timber for housing building rather than continuing to import.
- Securing the future of tourism was important, but further development need to be done in a way which was sensitive to communities and their concerns. There was the potential to attract more international visitors with a modernised tourism offering. Electric Vehicle charging points were also highlighted as important for tourism.
- Recognising the role and value of communities and places was important – not just a sectoral approach.
- The quality of life of SOS attracted people to the region.
- Accessible language was important to ensure it was understandable to people across the region.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

3. Duncan McConchie declared an interest in relation to the item on the Scottish Wedding Industry Fund.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4. The minutes of the meetings on 3 December 2020 and 9 December 2020 were agreed.

Board members discussed the initial draft of public minutes from the November Board meeting. They asked that the contributions of individual members not be separately identified as the Board made a collective decision. It was agreed that in future public Board minutes would be circulated electronically to the Board for an approval before being published.

Decision: Public versions of Board minutes would be circulated to Board members electronically for approval before being published.

ACTION LOG

5. The updated action tracker was noted.

An update paper on a project funding application previously considered had also been circulated. The Board agreed the proposal based on the resolution of questions raised at a previous Board meeting.

CHAIR'S REPORT

6. Russel Griggs, Chair reflected on the challenges which had arisen around Brexit, particularly highlighting the challenges of movement of goods into and out of the UK which was having significant impacts on food and drink and haulage businesses. Other Board members highlighted similar challenges which they were aware of around red meat exports, and mutual recognition of products. It was considered that the non-tariff barriers were most challenging.

In highlighting SOSEs response, it was reported that SOSE was working with a number of businesses and the internal funds were a resource to be utilised – particularly for adaptation and diversification. The Board considered it was important not to forget support for small businesses. Increased communications work would be planned to help businesses think how they could adapt their businesses.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

7. Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy as acting CEO updated the Board on the range of activity undertaken across the four directorates. The work around regional land use partnerships (RLUP) was raised with a request for further information about the pilot to be provided.

UPDATE FROM THE SHADOW WORKERS' INTEREST COMMITTEE

8. A paper which provided an update on the work of the Shadow Workers' Interest Committee was considered by the Board.

Decision: The Board noted the update from the Shadow Workers' Interest Committee.

PEOPLE UPDATE

9. John Evans, Director of Enabling Services provided the Board with an overview of the findings from the latest staff survey and measures put in place by the SLT to support SOSE staff through the increased COVID19 restrictions. The Board were supportive of the measures taken by the SLT, noting that they were important temporary measures. Other Board members commented on a desire for greater connections to be built between the Board and the staff.

Decision: The Board noted the update on the Staff Survey and measures to support staff members.

HEALTH AND SAFETY BRIEFING TRAINING

10. A proposal for Health and Safety training for SLT and Board members was considered.

Decision: The Board agreed the proposals for Health and Safety training.

CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

11. An update paper on the Convention of the South of Scotland was considered by the Board.

Decision: The Board noted the update on the Convention of the South of Scotland.

SOSE FINANCE REPORT

12. Anthony Daye, Director of Finance provided an overview of SOSE balance sheet and the indicative budget for the next financial year. The following key points were noted:

- A number of projects were due to receive funding by the end of the financial year, and staff were working hard to process these.
- There was potential for £1.2million in consequential funding to come to SOSE.
- Conversations around staffing requirements were ongoing though importantly input will be required from the incoming Chief Executive.
- Board members requested an update on the Community Ideas Fund. A full update on all funds would be brought to a future Board meeting.
- Questions were raised around the costs of shared services. A discussion on this would be organised to consider it in more depth.
- The Board requested more detailed information on the activity of Operations, in the manner of the dashboard which had been in development.

Decision: The Finance Report was noted by the Board.

SCOTTISH WEDDING INDUSTRY FUND

13. Bryan McGrath, Director of Operations highlighted the work that had been undertaken to put in place a Covid related Scottish Wedding Industry Fund and that the Fund went live at Midday, 28 January 2021. The following points were noted:

- Scottish Government had requested SOSE deliver this additional fund to meet COVID related issues specific to the sector
- Approval of the SOS allocation and delegation of authority to staff who would be validating
- An inherent higher risk of fraud in the process had been accepted due to the speed of set up and delivery
- The volume of applications to be validated as well as paid was also an increased risk factor
- Processing of banking details and payments – access would be limited to Finance staff.
- Volumes expected to be high and SLA for payment to clients meant this would be challenging and carried risk of error.
- SOSE would carry out sample checks of validation during, and after the payment, to reduce risk of fraud

Decision: The Board noted the update on the Scottish Wedding Industry Fund.

MOUNTAIN BIKING INNOVATION CENTRE AND BIKE PARK

14. Two Project Managers from Scottish Cycling joined the meeting to provide an overview of the project. A discussion followed and the following key points were noted:

- It was important to use the opportunity to strengthen the mountain biking product across the whole South of Scotland, with longer stays in the region.
- The work with AIMS was highlighted as important with opportunities to attract new businesses in light manufacturing.
- There was potential in the project to bring young people to the South of Scotland.
- Mountain Biking whilst having high end products was also an accessible sport for young people in the local areas.

Bryan McGrath, Director of Operations followed with a presentation on the wider Borderlands context. A discussion followed and the following key points were noted:

- The project required SOSE to take an active role.
- The project would likely be complex and would potentially require a Special Purpose Vehicle.
- It would be important for SOSE to clarify its role, responsibilities, and financial commitment.
- Board members were keen that it did not set a precedent for other Borderlands projects to be taken on by SOSE. Possible reputational issues with some of the other Borderlands projects were highlighted.
- Information on the other Borderlands projects was requested by the Board. The Board were also keen to establish which of the projects SOSE would want to be involved in driving forward.
- SOSE would need to build additional staffing capacity to take on the project.
- Linking the project with the UNESCO Biosphere and into the South of Scotland Destination Alliance was suggested.
- Branding other mountain biking centres as 'satellite centres' was also suggested.

Decision: The Board noted the contents of the presentation.

CONSULTATIONS

15. Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy updated the Board on the work SOSE was doing in responding to consultations. The Corporate Governance Lead presented a draft response for the consultation on the Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies. The following key points were noted:

- SOSE had responded to consultation on the Scottish Government's Digital Strategy and on Place Based Economic Development.
- A response was being developed to the Draft Position Statement for NPF4, which would be developed and cleared by the Chair before submission.

Decision: The draft response for the Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies was approved.

REFLECTION ON STRATEGY SESSIONS

16. Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy provided an overview of the survey responses received from Board members on the Strategy Sessions.

Decision: The Board agreed the proposed programme of Strategy Sessions.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17. Russel Griggs, Chair formally noted his and the Board's thanks to the Interim CEO for his hard work to develop SOSE in its first year.

Board members raised the split of staff based in either Dumfries & Galloway or the Scottish Borders to ensure that the region was effectively covered. With staff working from home, office locations were not currently an issue.

The Board also suggested that a report on COP26 be brought to the next Board.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18. Next Full Board Meeting: Thursday 25 February 2021 (9.30am)

SOSE Board Secretariat – 2 February 2021