

MINUTE OF MEETING

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE – BOARD MEETING 26 AUGUST 2021 – BY MICROSOFT TEAMS

<p>Board Professor Russel Griggs OBE (Chair) Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive Alistair Cameron Alan Daubney Helen Forsyth Duncan McConchie Lindsay McDowell Jeremy Sainsbury David Sulman Kate Rowell Hazel Smith Professor Sara Carter</p> <p>SOSE Senior Leadership Team Anthony Daye, Director of Finance & Corporate Resources John Evans, Director of Transformation & Development Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy, Partnerships & Engagement Bryan McGrath, Director of Place & Enterprise</p>	<p>SOSE Attendees Susan Cannon, Corporate Governance Lead Claire Renton, Head of Area Operations Kate Musgrave, Head of Area Operations Peter Dobson, Economic Infrastructure Development Project Manager Neil Macgregor, Economic Infrastructure Development Specialist Laura Neish, HR Manager Ben Campbell, Head of Digital Development David Ford, Strategy and Planning Manager Garry Legg, Strategy and Planning Manager Linsey McGillivray, Corporate Office (Minute taker) Fiona Sköller, Corporate Office</p> <p>Guests Scottish Government - Regional Economic Development Division Representatives from South of Scotland Destination Alliance</p>
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WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. The Chair also welcomed guests from South of Scotland Destination Alliance and Scottish Government.

GUEST SPEAKER - SOUTH OF SCOTLAND DESTINATION ALLIANCE (SSDA)

2. SSDA CEO gave an update on the activities of the SSDA strategy, its performance and key strategic activity. They spoke of addressing the dynamics of domestic visitors and the high degree of seasonality. SSDA wish to make the south of Scotland a “Go To” place rather than a “Go Through” place and seek to develop products, activities and experiences to attract a higher audience year-round and to increase the length of stay. The slide deck included SSDA Year 1 progress, four strategic projects:
 - 1 Extend the season
 - 2 Sustainable Tourism
 - 3 Literary Heartlands
 and details of SOSE support and potential feasibility studies.
3. SSDA spoke of the challenge of negative media on tourism and its impact. The Chair thanked SSDA for the informative presentation and commented that tourism is important to SOSE and is critical to the South of Scotland. Tourism is for everyone including businesses and social enterprise and is central to everything we do.

4. The Board discussed:

- The fragmented approach to visitor tourism and the need to improve the relationship with Visit Scotland and local agencies, chambers of commerce, social enterprise and organisations
- A stronger integration with the Biosphere
- The need for improvement of customer service, infrastructure to facilitate the use of fresh local produce and a digital platform
- A meeting with MSPs to discuss the self-caterers licensing scheme

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

5. A Board Member declared interest in items 10.1 and 11.3. It was agreed that they would remain in the meeting for item 11.3 but take no part in discussion or decision making. Item 10.1 was moved to the end of the Agenda and the Board member would leave the meeting before discussion commenced.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

6. The minute of the meeting of 17 June Board was circulated and agreed.

Decision: The minute of the previous meeting was agreed.

ACTION LOG

7. The updated action tracker was noted.

CHAIR'S REPORT

8. The Chair informed of recent activity:

- A climate change paper is to be provided to the Net Zero strategy session on 07 September and this would be presented to 30 September Board to discuss.
- It is hoped that we will be shortlisted for the City of Culture bid.
- Discussions with Ministers continue.
- Visits to the Great Tapestry and Trimontium museum – both were outstanding.
- Visits to businesses – all are busy, discussing expansion, employing more staff and looking to the future.

9. The Board was interested in the engagement with leadership groups and a co-ordinated approach in engaging with sectors that are managed by other agencies such as HIE and SE. The Chair informed that Enterprise Agency Chairs met to discuss national issues and an Industry Leadership Group paper will be produced.

10. The Board discussed the requirement to co-ordinate and identify areas as preferred business development sites across the region. It is recognised that existing sites should be activated to make land effective and available.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

11. Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive informed of recent activity:

- Organisation restructure – a full paper will come to Board in September to share the output of the prioritisation exercise mapping current work in the four directorates.
- Support on HR.
- Focus on action plans, business, complex support and projects.
- Ongoing support for communications and marketing – good articles in the press with a quote from Russel in the Scotsman.
- Held the first Net Zero commission for South of Scotland.
- Significant work around the City of Culture bid – roundtables with Dumfries & Galloway Council, the Scottish Borders Council, Carlisle Council, Northumberland Council and Cumbria Council.
- Susan Harkins was appointed Head of Innovation and Entrepreneurship which dovetailed with Ben Campbell as Head of Digital Development.

SLT Report and Operations Enquiry Dashboard

12. The reduction in direct enquiries in June was noted and it was explained that there was a lull due to summer holidays and the mechanism of capture of data in the present system does not reflect the actual enquiries. 67% of enquiries were not dealt with within 3 days and a review of the client journey and processes has instigated a move to a new system to improve response rate. An internal data analyst was recruited to help make use of the internal data. There are new Insights team members and SOSE will ensure that CRM is not optional and must be used whilst recognising it needs to be more user friendly.
13. It was confirmed that Coast 2 Coast was being funded from a large funding package which includes the Tourism Recovery Fund.
14. Business Gateway were focussed on start-up businesses and were moving away from turnover thresholds.
15. HR – the excellent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training was noted, and it was suggested this may be a session for the Board and can be discussed at HR Committee.
16. Return to work for staff - From 27th September staff will return to work with a hybrid home/office working model. Consultation with staff highlighted some anxiety. As part of the managed return to offices in Dumfries and Selkirk, in the short-term spokes will not be used until assurance is provided on the level of sanitation at these locations and there are secure wi-fi access arrangements in place. The Board was reassured that thought and sensitivity has gone in to the planning for staff to return to offices; it will not be prescriptive, and SOSE is following Scottish Government and NHS guidelines.

Decision: The Board noted the regular update which was provided by the Senior Leadership Team.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

17. An update from the Remuneration, Nominations and Human Resources Committee was provided for information.

Decision: The Board noted the update from the RNHR Committee.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

18. Laura Neish spoke about the Employee Assistance programme and how SOSE actively promotes the service for staff, Board members and families to access professional advice and

support to improve health and wellbeing via a confidential helpline. SOSE pays for this service through the Scottish Government procurement framework for a fixed annual fee of approximately £1,000 and £30 per month. The service can be used for counselling services. Usage of the service has been extremely low, and discussion was held about further promotion of the service to normalise it and raise awareness of it. When staff are working face-to-face awareness will grow and line managers will signpost to it.

Decision: *The Board noted the Employment Assistant programme update.*

PROJECT FUNDING APPLICATIONS

19. The Board considered two project funding applications. Both proposals were agreed or agreed in principle.

“Details of projects funded, and their values are published by SOSE on a quarterly basis once all relevant contractual terms have been agreed. Please refer to the SOSE website for information on the Grant Funding that we have distributed. [SOSE - Accessing our information](#)”

OPERATIONS UPDATE

20. Bryan McGrath outlined funding projects as below.

Borderlands Project and Budget Commitments

21. The Board was invited to agree the breakdown of the £650k revenue and £980k capital budget allocations set out at Section 7 for the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal projects that are being developed. An update and overview of the Borderlands budget was given by Claire Renton, Head of Area Operations who highlighted areas where SOSE is proposing to make a financial contribution.

Decision: *The Board was in agreement with the breakdown of allocations as noted.*

SSDA Progress Report 2020/21

22. The Board was asked to note this progress report on the work of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance’s work, specifically the progress made in Year 1 and the planned activity for Year 2.

Decision: *The Board noted the SSDA progress report.*

23. The Board considered two further project funding updates. Both of the proposals were agreed or agreed in principle.

“Details of projects funded, and their values are published by SOSE on a quarterly basis once all relevant contractual terms have been agreed. Please refer to the SOSE website for information on the Grant Funding that we have distributed. [SOSE - Accessing our information](#)”

HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA)

24. Claire Renton gave insight to and demonstrated the importance of SSDA to the south of Scotland. SOSE has attended monthly meetings with national partners around strategy and tourism

specific activity and has had weekly meetings with SSDA to feed in rural and South of Scotland perspectives. SOSE represented and promoted SSDA at national forums and maximises opportunities to promote all tourism, energy, agriculture, hospitality, creative and cultural aspects.

Decision: The Board thanked Claire for the insight to SSDA.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

25. Anthony Daye, Director of Finance & Corporate Resources, provided Board members with the Annual Report and Accounts, performance, report accountability report and financial statements. It was recommended the Board approve the Annual Report and Accounts.
26. The Board was informed that the reporting around the national performance framework is a challenge, is work in progress, it is highly complex and is a journey which will take 3-5 years.
27. The Board and Chair expressed huge congratulations to the Finance team and wider colleagues who fed in to the report – the external and internal auditors were also praised. Compliments were received on the layout of the Annual Report. SOSE is in a great place at the end of year one.

Decision: The Board approved the final draft of the Annual Report and Accounts

FINANCE UPDATE

28. Anthony Daye provided a Finance update for July which included information on external consultants.

Decision: The Board noted the Finance update.

UPDATE ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

29. Garry Legg provided a paper and an update on the next steps in progressing the South of Scotland RES including a submission of a response by SOSE to the consultation on the draft RES. The Board was invited to review and agree the proposed consultation response and to note the next steps leading up to and including the launch of the final RES.
30. The consultation is closed, and it was noted there was very positive strong support on vision and key themes and detailed comments from businesses were received. Demographic data was not captured but Dumfries & Galloway Council led on some excellent work which was provided by two modern apprenticeships who provided an extensive programme for young people during the summer and complemented that with online workshops.
31. The response was focused and self-explanatory with a key focus in strengthening the approach to Just Transition to Net Zero and making it more ambitious. Comments received from the Board members on the response included a recommendation to insert a sentence about inclusive growth, the importance of young people, women, childcare and more people benefitting from economic development. There was also comment that although it was a well-structured paper, it lacked deliverables, but assurance was given that it is intended to publish the RES then publish the first of series of short-term, medium and long-term delivery plans around it. Board members complimented the paper and found it readable and actionable.

Decision: The Board agreed the proposed consultation response with the additional text.

UPDATE ON SOSE ACTION PLAN

32. Garry Legg provided an update on the work underway to progress SOSE's first Action Plan and the approach to engaging with those who live, work and operate across the South of Scotland.
33. The Board was asked to note the work underway to develop SOSE's Action Plan and were invited to comment on the proposed process for developing it including the approach to consultation.
34. The paper highlighted the Action Plan for the three-year period 2022-2025 aligning with other Enterprise and Skills Agencies. A consultation will take place mid-October with a view to publishing a report in May/June 2022.

Decision: The Board noted the work underway to develop SOSE's Action Plan

DIGITAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

35. Ben Campbell spoke to slides on the vision for Digital Development in the South of Scotland. SOSE's support was detailed for delivery to Communities, Businesses and Economic Infrastructure in relation to:
 - Digital Connectivity and Access
 - Digital Adoption and Skills
 - Digital Transformation and Enablement
 - Digital Leadership and Innovation
36. SOSE has grown its digital expertise to help direct engagement with clients. Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive has been making national connections and has been invited to join the Civitech Board. It was agreed that digital infrastructure is extremely important.
37. Ben Campbell was thanked for his presentation.

Decision: The Board noted the update and are whole heartedly supportive of this piece of work.

SOSE BOARD FORWARD PLAN

38. The Board was invited to note the Forward Plan detailing future agenda items and strategy sessions.

Decision: The Board noted the Forward programme.

AOB

- Frequency of meetings – this discussion will move to the September Board.
- Green Ports – for information - David Ford spoke to the current position of Scottish Government's Green Port bidding process and the status of the Cairnryan bid.
- Update on Curries - Driver shortages are still a big issue. There are delays with HMRC as no response has been received. SOSE will continue to monitor.
- Board placements - Discussion was held about progressing Board placements with operational staff.

Approved 30.9.21

Decision: *Consideration is to be given to Board members spending time working with operational staff in a geographical area or sector they are not necessarily familiar with (or an area of their expertise) which will help Board members foster their understanding of matters at an operational level.*

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

39. 30 September 2021 – 11.00 am to 3.00pm