250508 (162) FOI Hawick Business Centre

From: Freedom of Information
To: [redacted]
Cc: Freedom of Information
Subject: FOI Hawick Business Centre Evaluation and Funding
Date: 08 May 2025 15:52:12
Attachments: [redacted]

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 14 April 2025. We are responding to you under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

FOI REQUEST (14 April 2025)

1. The scope, terms of reference, and methodology for the independent evaluation currently being undertaken for Hawick Business Centre.
2. The name of the organisation or consultant appointed to carry out the evaluation.
3. The expected timeline for completion and publication of the evaluation.
4. A copy of the funding application submitted by SOSE (or on behalf of SOSE) to Scottish Borders Council for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 in relation to Hawick Business Centre.
5. Any criteria or assessment framework used by Scottish Borders Council to assess this application.
6. Any correspondence, briefings, or meeting notes referring to:
   (a) The funding application for 2025/26,
   (b) The ongoing evaluation,
   (c) Future delivery of services at Hawick Business Centre.
7. A copy of the current strategic partnership agreement between Scottish Borders Council and SOSE for the delivery of activity at Hawick Business Centre.
8. Any monitoring or performance reports related to the delivery of services at the centre during the 2024/25 financial year.

FOI RESPONSE

1. The scope, terms of reference, and methodology for the evaluation is attached (Appendix A).

2. Frontline is the name of the appointed consultant

3. The expected timeline for publishing is May 2025.

4. In regard to providing SOSE's funding application to the UKPF, we apply FOISA section 33(1)(b) – substantial prejudice to commercial interests where disclosure would (or would be likely to) prejudice substantially the commercial interests of any person or organisation including a public authority, company and partnership.

The use of this exemption requires SOSE to consider the public interest in both disclosing and not disclosing the information, and in this case, it has been decided the public interest is in withholding the application. SOSE would not want to prejudice substantially its commercial position by disclosing information.

5. SOSE was not involved in the criteria or framework for applications for funding. We therefore apply Section 17(1) of FOISA to notify you that we do not hold the information you requested.

6. Correspondences, briefing or meetings notes:
   a. The funding application - attached (Appendix B)
   b. The ongoing evaluation – there is no ongoing evaluation
   c. Future delivery of services –attached (Appendix B)

We have applied Exemption 38(1)(b) - Personal Data - to questions 6(a) and 6(b). Personal information such as names or email addresses have been redacted. SOSE is satisfied that this information constitutes 'personal data' and it would therefore be unlawful to disclose it. Exemption 38(1)(b) is an absolute exemption, so there is no requirement to consider the public interest in the application of this exemption.

7. The Strategic Partnership Protocol between Scottish Borders Council and SOSE is attached (Appendix C) and is also available on the SOSE website - https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/news/partnership-protocol-agreed-between-council-and-enterprise-agency

8. Monitoring or performance reports related to the delivery of services at the centre in the form of two case studies are attached (Appendix D).

We have applied Exemption 38(1)(b) - Personal Data - to questions 8. Personal information such as names or email addresses have been redacted. SOSE is satisfied that this information constitutes 'personal data' and it would therefore be unlawful to disclose it. Exemption 38(1)(b) is an absolute exemption, so there is no requirement to consider the public interest in the application of this exemption.

You have the right to request a review of the way in which this request has been processed. Should you wish to exercise this right, you will need to contact us within 40 working days of receipt of this email.

If you remain dissatisfied on completion of the review, you have the right to appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner and thereafter to the Court of Session on a point of law only:

Scottish Information Commissioner
Kinburn Castle

Doubledykes Road
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 9DS
Telephone: 01334 464610
www.foi.scot
or for online appeals:
www.foi.scot/appeal

Regards,
SOSE Corporate Relations Team
FOI@sose.scot

www.southofscotlandenterprise.com

Appendix A

SCHEDULE 1 - SPECIFICATION

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this Invitation to Quote (ITQ) is to appoint a supplier to undertake the Evaluation of Hawick Business Centre.

This specification sets out what is required, provides background information and context, and invites suppliers to respond to Schedule 2 (Technical Evaluation) and Schedule 3 (Pricing Schedule) to form your quote for the contract.

2. Background and Context

2.1. South of Scotland Enterprise

The South of Scotland Enterprise Agency (SOSE) was established as a non-departmental public body on the 1 April 2020 to support economic and community development for the South of Scotland region (covering both Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders local authority areas).

Our overarching aims are to further the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland; and to improve the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland.

The South of Scotland Enterprise aims to promote and celebrate entrepreneurial talent across our region, as part of this ambition we aim to be bold and ensure that our approach addresses the lack of participation in under-represented groups across the Region.

SOSE are piloting a place-based business centre in Hawick in partnership with Scottish Borders Council to drive entrepreneurial activity across the region.

Our work aligns with the ambitions of NSET, South of Scotland Regional Plan, SOSE fiveyear plan and Scottish Government Pathways report.

This contract will cover The South of Scotland

3. Objectives / Statement of Requirements

3.1 Scope of Services

The contractor is expected to use their knowledge, expertise and experience to deliver the most appropriate methods to carry out this work and ensure that methods are

transferrable to South of Scotland partners, including the rights to all materials, notes, guidance, data and methods, relevant to this contract. The final deliverables will be published and all underlying data and analysis will be provided to SOSE

To provide a robust Evaluation and impact assessment of the Hawick Business Centre including

• Providing continued assessment and evaluation from the start of the project and final report.

• Determine the relevance and level of achievement of project objectives, development of effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability

• Outcomes – What outcomes have been achieved, for whom and under what circumstances. You should also report on intended outcomes.

• Activities and outputs – What has been delivered, when and to who

• Processes – Information about how you delivered your outputs.

• Produce and interim draft by 14 February 2025 followed by the final draft on 31 March 2025

Appendix B

From: [redacted]>
Sent: 06 March 2025 14:04
To: [redacted]@sose.scot>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@sose.scot>
Subject: [OFFICIAL] RE: SPF FUNDING 2025/26

Caution: This email originated outside of the organisation. **Think** before you click on any links or open any attachments. Is it safe to do so? **Always** carry out appropriate checks or use the Report Message button if suspicious.

Hi [redacted]

Sorry it took so long to get back to you. I have shared the info for consideration and we will get back to you if we need anything else.

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@sose.scot>
Sent: 28 February 2025 12:41
To: [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@scotborders.gov.uk>; [redacted]@sose.scot>
Subject: SPF FUNDING 2025/26
Importance: High

CAUTION: External Email

Hi All,

It was great to catch up regarding SPF funding activity for next financial year.

I have pulled together an updated draft proposals for discussion, with regards to Hawick there are a couple of costs I still need to confirm and have highlighted around business rates and centre management.

This is a draft for us to discuss therefore appreciate that there might be changes etc and I still need to get SOSE SLT approval.

Let me know when good time to meet up to discuss.

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Email: [redacted]@sose.scot

Contact No: [redacted]

www.southofscotlandenterprise.com

Appendix C

PROPOSED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROTOCOL BETWEEN SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL AND SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE

Report by Executive Director (Corporate Improvement & Economy)

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

26 November 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **This report proposes that Scottish Borders Council enters into a Strategic Partnership Protocol with South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) to assist both bodies to work collaboratively together to achieve their joint aims and for the benefit of the economy in the area.**

1.2 South of Scotland Enterprise formally commenced its operations on the 1st of April 2020. Its creation represents a major change in the in the economic development landscape across the South of Scotland and offers opportunities to take different and innovative approaches to the delivery economic development across the South of Scotland.

1.3 Scottish Borders Council retains economic development amongst its functions and it is considered vital that both bodies work together in a collaborative way to achieve their joint aims. In recent years, SBC has entered into partnership protocols with its strategic partners - such as Live Borders and CGI. As this has proved to be an effective tool, it is considered that it would be helpful and consistent with that approach to enter into such a protocol with the new Agency.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that approval is given to enter into a Strategic Partnership Protocol with South of Scotland Enterprise in the terms detailed in the Appendix to this report.

3 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

3.1 The South of Scotland Enterprise Act 2019 established the South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). Its formal operations commenced on 1 April 2020 and the Act provides that its aims are to:

a) further the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland, and
b) improve the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland

3.2 It is recognised that one of the most critical factors for the effective operation of SOSE will be its relationships with the two Local Authorities within its areas.

3.3 Scottish Borders Council retains the function of economic development amongst its responsibilities and is committed to working with the Agency to achieve our mutual aims including, of course, the Regional Economic Strategy. The new Agency is therefore very much a strategic partner of the Council. This reflected in SOSE being a new statutory partner in the Community Planning Partnership

3.4 In recent years the Council has chosen to enter into partnership protocols with its strategic partners such as Live Borders and CGI. The purpose of those protocols is to set out the rules of engagement between the two organisations; to establish and commit to working collaboratively together in a mutually supportive way to ensure that strategic aims and goals are met. It is considered that it would be appropriate and consistent to enter into such a protocol with this newly created and important strategic partner.

3.5 The Appendix to this report contains a proposed Strategic Partnership Protocol. The Protocol details the aims of the Strategic Partnership and the commitment from both parties for working together in such a way as to maximise the benefit for the Scottish Borders. It is considered that this is an appropriate basis to establish a relationship with the Agency.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 **Financial**
There are no financial implications arising out of the recommendations in this report.

4.2 **Risk & Mitigations**
There is a risk that if the recommendations in this report are not agreed, an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with a key strategic partner will be lost.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**
An integrated impact assessment will be completed. It is anticipated that strengthening the relationship between SBC and the Agency will have a positive impact on the economic well-being of the Scottish Borders area.

4.4 **Acting Sustainably**
It is anticipated that strengthening the relationship between SBC and the Agency will have a positive impact on the economic and environmental well-being of the Scottish Borders area.

4.5 **Carbon Management**
It is not anticipated that there will be any effects on carbon emissions as a direct result of the recommendations in this report.

4.6 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
No changes to the Schemes of Administration or Delegation are required by the recommendations in this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, the Monitoring Officer / Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council, and Corporate Communications and have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

5.2 The Corporate Management Team have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

[redacted] **Signature .....**
Executive Director
Corporate Improvement & Economy

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
[redacted]	Chief Legal Officer, [redacted]

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

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

Contact us at: Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 03001001800, email eitranslationrequest@scotborders.gov.uk.

Appendix

Strategic Partnership Protocol

We, the Scottish Borders Council (a local authority established under Section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994) and the South of Scotland Enterprise (established by Section 1 of the South of Scotland Enterprise Act 2019), intend to work closely together to achieve our joint aims of furthering sustainable economic and social development and improvement of the amenity and environment.

We agree it would be beneficial to enter into this Protocol to set out the ways in which we will work together to achieve those aims.

Now therefore we agree as follows:

(1) We will work with each other cooperatively in partnership to discharge our responsibilities in relation to our joint aims and to apply our respective specialist knowledge and skills and expertise to achieve that end.;
(2) Make a sincere effort to work together as one team; understand the other party's obligations, goals, expectations, duties and objectives and actively support each other to be mutually successful;
(3) Be open, honest, transparent and professional in all dealings relating to our joint aims and to give a true account of such dealings;
(4) Work within a spirit of co-operation to enable the achievement of our joint aims to a high standard;
(5) Resolve differences that may arise in relation to our joint aims by discussion and negotiation wherever possible;
(6) Communicate clearly and effectively, and in a timely manner, on all matters relating to our joint aims;
(7) Make the most efficient use of resources ensuring we achieve Best Value to the benefit of both ourselves and our residents;
(8) Commit to providing continuous improvement ideas;
(9) Give an early warning to the other Party of any matter that they become aware of that could affect the achievement of any shared aim;

To foster a successful working relationship at every level, the Parties will endeavour to implement the following:

(10) Agree and develop communication channels across both organisations;
(11) Co-locate personnel wherever practicable to maximise communication, collaboration and deep business understanding at all levels.
(12) Second personnel across the Party's organisations where that will bring demonstrable benefits.

Appendix D

INVESTMENT PRIORITY: SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS
Intervention: S20 Expert business advice and support programmes, local and regional

PROJECT NAME: Hawick Enterprise Centre - Business Accelerator Programme
South of Scotland Enterprise
(Website/Facebook Link where details of project can be found)

Start Date: 30/11/2023	Completion Date: 31 March 2025	Total Project Costs: £298,000.00	SPF Award: £123,000.00	Match Funding: £175,000.00

Project Summary:
(PLEASE GIVE A SUMMARY OF WHAT WAS CARRIED OUT BY YOUR PROJECT, PLEASE USE EASY TO READ ENGLISH SO ALL CAN UNDERSTAND EASILY WHAT THE PROJECT ENTAILED – NO JARGON PLEASE)

The project formed a strategic partnership between Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland Enterprise to furnish and fit out the space for Local businesses and entrepreneurs across the region to access, connect and learn, driving business growth and entrepreneurship.

The Centre provides: -

short-term, working spaces and small bookable meeting rooms with modern video conference facilities for businesses as well as the wider community to use

presentation space and a digital lab to provide users with advanced facilities such as podcast recording studio, live streaming and virtual reality headsets

space to host SOSE's business accelerator programme for enterprises and businesses

Achievements: *(specifically linked to Outputs/Outcomes which were identified – please check your estimated Outputs and Outcomes in your original application form and provide relevant (ie. project created 2 jobs, improved 1 community facility etc)*

- Created an enterprising space in rural area
- Over 500 businesses/individuals accessing the centre facilities since May 2024
- 2 accelerator programmes delivered with 14 businesses supported
- 28 events held
- Positive feedback from the users of the building
- Independent evaluation currently being finalised and will be shared in April 2025
- Potential inward investment interested in using the centre for starting an exciting Tech/AI R & D project

Photo: *(please ensure photos provided are your own and not covered by copyright or have the owners permission to use)*

Quotes from beneficiaries:

"Accelerate had a huge impact on my business - it gave me the time and space to get clear on my plans, and confident in my brand and direction."

"It has instilled a tremendous sense of confidence in my ability to run a successful business. Strategy for growth it something I hadn't addressed, my approach before Accelerator was more follow my nose."

"The Accelerate programme has forced us to look at our business critically, and to work on the why of it - why do we do what we do, is it the right thing to do in our location, and who are we doing it for? These are all really difficult questions and have led to a lot of changes."

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Funded by UK Government

Scottish Borders Council

UKSPF Case Study Template	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Project Name:	Hawick Business Centre
Total UKSPF Funding:	£123,000
Details of any match funding:	£175,000
Investment Priority:	Jobs & Business
Outputs:	100 Businesses receiving non-financial support
Outcomes:	10% increase in number of businesses supported
Start Date:	1 November 2024
End Date:	28 February 2025
Location (full address):	10 to 12 Oliver Crescent, Hawick, TD9 8BQ

200 word summary

Hawick Business Centre opened on 18 April, with a range of business and community representatives attending the open day. The accelerator programme has started with 8 businesses registering who have growth aspirations, bringing the cohort together to learn, connect and share knowledge. This 3-month programme will run until end of July 2024 and the 2nd cohort of the programme is scheduled to start in September.

The Business Centre is starting to build momentum, up to 30 June 2024 we have held 14 events ranging from 1-1 expert support sessions, AI for business, techscaler unplugged, adviser drop-in sessions and podcasting. Local businesses and organisations have started using the centre as a meeting place as well as hot desking. The Business Centre has welcomed 240 visitors to the centre since the Launch.

The Business Centre has held several partners hosting events including Borders Chamber, Business Gateway and the South of Scotland Enterprise aimed at supporting businesses in the region.

The Business Centre has been welcomed by both business the community in Scottish Borders and there is a real buzz around the town.

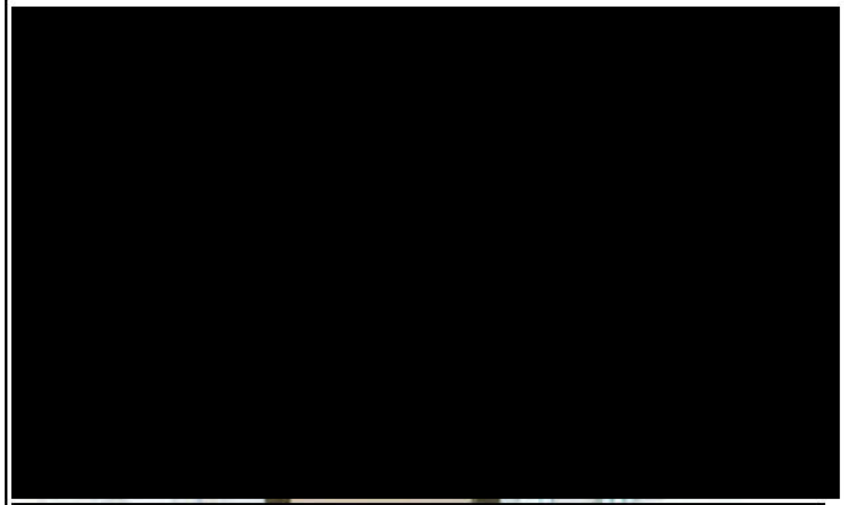
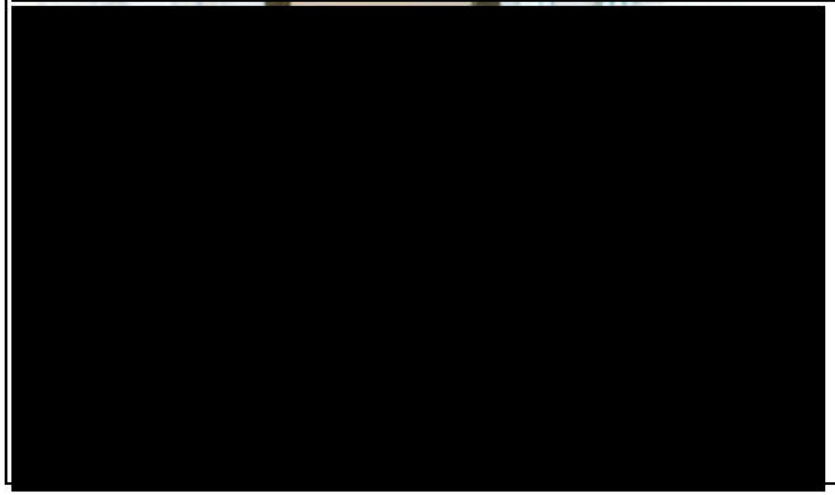
2 quotes about the project

Artificial Intelligence Workshop
'I found your presentation hugely beneficial and genuinely inspiring' - [redacted], [redacted]
'It was an excellent presentation. I have been to hundreds in the past, but you are in the top three!' - [redacted], [redacted]

Some Accelerate Feedback:

“Great set up, airy space, adaptable and personable coach, hard hitting business insights. Lovely group. wonderful that this is provided free of charge to help local businesses to develop and grow.” - [redacted] – [redacted]

“It was another inspiring and motivating session, and I am finding it very beneficial to spend a dedicated and focused amount of time thinking about our core business strategies.” - [redacted] – [redacted]

“I’m loving the course - lots to challenge but not overwhelm me” - [redacted]

Photos