

## Video transcript - South of Scotland Enterprise Board recruitment - discussion with current Board members

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Russel Griggs

A good afternoon. My name's Russel Griggs and I'm the chairman of South of Scotland Enterprise. I'm delighted to speak to you this afternoon and even more delighted that I'm joined by two of my great board members Emma Guy and Alistair Cameron. I'll let them both introduce themselves here, personally and in a minute when we get to that part and the best webinar. But today it's about telling you of the exciting opportunity that we are looking for two new board members for South of Scotland Enterprise.

South of Scotland Enterprise is the community and Economic Development Agency for the South of Scotland covering both for the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Council areas and as such is the body charged with developing the economy and the communities of the South of Scotland and taking them into a flourishing and thriving future.

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Russel Griggs

Our Board of 10 people play an incredibly important part in that, and we've tried to put together an eclectic mix of people that cover both our sectors and our communities and have expertise, as you'll hear in a minute across a wide range of stuff using the technical term.

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Russel Griggs

Our role as South of Scotland's economic and community development agency is to boost the economy, boost the community but also welcomes some of the weight of big issues too, so that in housing and transport.

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Russel Griggs

And as a board member, not only will you become involved in board meetings, but some of our board members sit on the Regional Economic Partnership and some of our board members are like Alistair, Chair, some of the sub committees of the board.

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Russel Griggs

We've been alive since April 2020 when we started in the midst of Covid, so for the 1st, 18 months were very virtual board.

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Russel Griggs

But now we started to meet together again physically, which can be fun, and we meet regularly across South of Scotland because of the organisation itself, does not have a fixed HQ and our aim is to be out and speak and meet with people across the whole of the South of Scotland.

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Russel Griggs

So your role is a significant one.

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Russel Griggs

We are an SME, we've only got 140 folk, so we're very different to the big public bodies so our Board are very much part of the team remembering as always as non-executive directors as that peculiar operational line that we try not to cross but we get involved with more than we do.

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Russel Griggs

I'm gonna start to introduce my two Board members.

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I'm gonna start with Alistair and Alistair because he's been with us since we started, and even before we started in the days of the South of Scotland Economic Partnership when we were creating South of Scotland Enterprise, so Alistair, why don't you talk about your experience on the board from day one all the way through, and at the beginning give us a little bit about yourself first please.

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Alistair Cameron

Thanks, Russel. And so yes, my name is Alistair Cameron. And as Russell says, I've been involved in South of Scotland Enterprise since 2018, which was two years before the organisation was started. There was an increasing recognition that the needs of the South of Scotland were very different from that of the central Belt.

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Alistair Cameron

perhaps not something that's lost on those of us who live and work here.

So, for many years the Highlands and Islands had its own economic Development agency, and over time it was increasingly recognised that the same differentiated approach would be of benefit to the South of Scotland. So I was asked to become involved in 2018 as the two Councils and Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Government came together to shape how the organisation would run, and we helped to navigate the legislative process through the Scottish Parliament that gave South of Scotland Enterprise is very unique focus of being both an economic and a Community development agency and that is vitally important to the work that we do. We don't just look at job numbers. We don't just look about grants. We look at the vibrancy and development of our communities and that's really at the heart of what we do.

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Alistair Cameron

So in 2020, in March 2020, the organisation was ready to go and we were ready for first

board meeting when something that called COVID came along and somewhat derailed their plans. And that business plan that we had all lovingly developed over 2 years as with most SMEs, got thrown out of the window at the first pass and we had to focus very quickly on maintaining and sustaining businesses in our area.

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Alistair Cameron

It created a number of challenges for us. We had to recruit a number of our key staff remotely and as board members, we got our hands very dirty, both in growing and sustaining and guiding the organisation on those vital first steps.

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Alistair Cameron

The last 18 months for us have been much more about establishing SOSE as in its permanent form. And as Russell said, we now have over 140 staff focused on delivering all aspects of our mission across South of Scotland. So, we have teams in community development, forestry and land and business advisors, community development advisors, all of whom looking to deliver both our capital and our revenue budget to be of benefit to the people of the South of Scotland.

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Alistair Cameron

I was very new to joining a public sector board. I had zero experience previously. I have previously and I'm still working in my family business, which we've scaled from a two person home based enterprise to employing over 50 people within the South of Scotland. So, I was definitely coming from a background of small and medium business and growing an entrepreneurial export driven innovation driven type of business.

Beside me on the board are people who have come from a charities background, others who have come from a land and forestry, and it's that diversity of opinion and backgrounds that really makes the board experience for me worthwhile with South of Scotland Enterprise. As a board member, I get to look at challenges I would never see in my day job. Yes, I get to bring my perspective to all. I also hear this perspective of eleven other people around the board table who have differing ideas and it would not be the first time that I've gone away from a board meeting to think I really need to think about that in my own organisation, so it's definitely not an entirely altruistic.

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Alistair Cameron

Please come and join the board. You will get an awful lot out of it. I always go from the added that you have two eyes, two ears and one mouth and we use it in that proportion. It's as much about a learning experience for you as a board member and to bring your experience.

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Alistair Cameron

So with that, I'll hand back to Russell and Emma.

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Russel Griggs

Thanks Alistair, that was super and as you say we expect our board members to contribute, but we expect him to speak and have views and that's one of the things we as an organisation always say - we listen 1st and do 2nd and we try to do that at the board as we evaluate what we do.

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Russel Griggs

Emma, you're one of our newest board members who joined us about a year and a bit ago, with three others. So, would you like to give us your views on someone who is thinking to apply or why they should become a board member please? And first tell us a bit about yourself.

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Emma Guy

Yeah. Thank thanks, Russell. I would echo a lot of the things that Alistair said. I mean, from my point of view, I'm a new board member my background is as a former professional athlete, I was mountain bike racer. And then I ran my own tourism business in in the Tweed Valley and generally worked in tourism and events since then.

So, I saw the advert for new board members and for me it was it was out of my comfort zone. But I felt really passionately about SOSE - what I had seen SOSE do, and what they were doing and the impact they were having, the time that they came along, which I thought was really an important time for the South of Scotland and a real opportunity.

And I wanted to be part of it. I wanted to be part of that change and the development of the South, because I think we live in an amazing area and so I thought I'll take a punt on this. I'll put an application in and I'm not sure whether I thought I was going to be successful but my application was driven by my passion for the area and particularly some of the projects that SOSE were getting involved in and given my cycling background I felt that I had something to contribute.

And so, my first year has been a steep learning curve and, learning about the process of a board and the kind of ins and outs that kind of technical sort of aspect. But everybody has been really welcoming. They've listened to my opinion and even there has been times I've felt a little bit out of my depth. But I've felt in a safe environment that I can say what I think and I can contribute my opinion. And I think that mix on the board is so important.

And I think that diversity and eclectic mix is a really, really positive thing on the board.

So, if you're watching this and thinking of applying and you think, maybe I'm not the type of person that would be on a board, but you've got that passion then putting an application in because we need people like you.

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Russel Griggs

OK. Thanks Emma.

Alistair, I think you already explained why you wanted to be our board member. Why would you encourage others to come on board?

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Alistair Cameron

As I have said, it's all about diversity of experience, diversity of opinion, and it's something that we absolutely embrace within SOSE and have done from day one as Emma says, it is a safe environment. Look, we're an SME. We will get things wrong in the early stage of our development. We have an appetite for risk and we have an appetite for trying to do positive things within our community. If those are the things that drive you, I'd again, echo Emma's comment, we need people to join us to, to help drive things forward and help to recognise where things could be better in the South of Scotland.

We won't solve every problem that we're faced with, but we'll have a damn good go and have some fun while we're at it.

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Russel Griggs

So we're looking specifically this time around for people with background in the land, specifically agriculture, and also with a background in the skills environment, so in colleges, universities, education, because those are two key areas that we're going to be facing into over the coming two years and that so we're looking specifically for people in that area.

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Russel Griggs

So I hope you find this video useful and you can find everything you need to know about the roles of South of Scotland Enterprise at the recruitment dashboard and you can find the link to applying in the same place.

So, thank you for listening and I hope and you will put in an application and have the passion that Emma Alistair and myself have for that. So, thank you.

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Russel Griggs

And thank you Emma. Thank you, Alistair, and we might see you soon. Thank you.