



APPROVED PUBLIC MINUTE OF MEETING

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE – BOARD MEETING

[Note: This public minute excludes wording removed in the interests of effective conduct of public affairs.]

06 MARCH 2025

Yarrow Meeting Room, Ettrick Riverside, Dunsdale Road, Selkirk TD7 5EB

<p>Board Professor Russel Griggs OBE (Chair) Alistair Cameron Rory Christie Viv Cockburn Helen Forsyth Emma Guy Duncan McConchie Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive Mary Thomson Paul Winstanley</p> <p>Board Apologies: Kirsten Hannay Jeremy Sainsbury</p> <p>SOSE Senior Leadership Team Anthony Daye, Acting Director of Place and Enterprise Karen Jackson, Director of Strategy, Partnership and Engagement Martin Valenti, Director of Net Zero, Nature and Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Guest Anna Austin</p>	<p>Scottish Government Scottish Government Officials – Regional Economic Development Division (in part)</p> <p>SOSE Staff via MS Teams Garry Legg, Head of Strategy, Planning and Partnerships Maureen Malone, Head of Governance and Assurance, Data Protection Officer Paula Ward, Economic Infrastructure Development Specialist</p> <p>SOSE Staff in person Alan Barr, Pathways Project Manager Claire Barrett, EA to Anthony Daye Lucy Filby, Head of Agricultural Transition Tracey Graham, Head of Communications and Marketing Nicola McArthur, Head of Finance Services Linsey McGillivray, EA to Chair – Minute Stella Milsom, Head of Change and Continuous Improvement Kate Musgrave, Head of Enterprising Communities Justin Orde, Strategic Lead for Food and Drink Supply Chain Transition Mark Rowley, Strategy Manager – Tourism</p>
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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chair welcomed Board members, guests and colleagues to the meeting. The meeting was declared quorate.
2. A Board member declared an interest in an indirect discussion point noted at paragraph 23 of this minute.

BOARD INTERNAL MATTERS

3. A separate confidential note was taken and would be circulated privately to members.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTION LOG

4. The Minute of the meeting held on 19 December 2024 was approved with the amendment on P7 – “grid capacity was fully committed”.
5. Action Log: The action log was noted, and it was agreed the action number 5 on Dumfries & Galloway Business Gateway was complete and could be closed.

Decision	The minute of the previous meeting on 19 December 2024 was approved with one amendment.
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CHAIR'S REPORT

6. The Chair reported on his recent meetings and engagement:
- SOSE held a formal discussion with Scottish Government to discuss Center Parcs. Further discussion was on the planning aspect, enabling the supply chain, local employment and the engagement with the local college for skills development and courses.
 - Convention of the South of Scotland (COSS) – Fiona Hyslop would Chair this event in the stead of DFM.
 - National Park – SOSE’s Head of Natural Capital attended Parliament along with the Chair to meet with Mairi Gougeon to discuss the National Park. The Director of Strategy, Partnership and Engagement will meet with NatureScot next week.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

7. The Chief Executive informed of recent activity and engagement:
- Attended Public Sector Reform session chaired by Ivan McKee. Many public sector organisations were present and were very engaged. There was agreement that compulsory redundancies could be considered when all other avenues had been explored.
 - A working sub-group was exploring an early retirement Scheme for SOSE.
 - Positive site visits had been held.
 - ARLA recognised SOSE for the work the team were doing and SOSE continued to work with them.
 - There was positive media coverage around the Stranraer Water Sports Centre and good feedback was received.
 - Pathways Pilot – although challenging this was a massive opportunity for SOSE and Scottish Government were delighted with the results so far. It was disappointing that the Deputy First Minister (DFM) was no longer attending COSS as there was a planned working session with Pathways Pilot members which had now been cancelled.
 - Visit Scotland – the first strategic working session took place.
 - Discover – funding was secured to explore the potential of establishing a mini regional data intelligence hub.
 - The impact of American tariffs on South of Scotland businesses was discussed.
8. The Acting Director of Place and Enterprise spoke to the performance figures and the primary and secondary measures. Two years of measures were included, and auditors had commented that SOSE was further forward than other agencies. It was commented that although there were red areas of target ranges that there would be massive variation in projects from year to year and it was suggested to encourage Business Development

Specialists to gather stronger data around value added and funding leverage and to ask these questions. A closer look would be given to ranges for year 3.

FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The Board considered three funding applications.

“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.

MONEY MATTERS

9. The Head of Finance Services spoke to the Draft Budget Report and Finance Update papers which had been circulated to Board members. Key prioritising areas, pressure positions and areas of normal slippage were highlighted but there were no concerns. There was discussion around external audit and the 5-year strategy. The Board were content with the Budget presented.

Decision	Board approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The basis of the budget along with noted changes including the assumptions made• The budget contained in the paper
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FUTURE SOSE

10. SOSE's Head of Change and Continuous Improvement was welcomed to the meeting. A short life working group had been formed with Board members and SOSE colleagues (strategic and operational split of members) to work together on the journey of change ahead.
11. The group will work with transparency and build trust and confidence for the way forward and will provide regular updates to Board.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

12. SOSE's Head of Enterprising Communities gave a presentation on SOSE Place Approach and the consideration of the physical, social and economic elements of a place for the support and enhancement of the potential of people, physical and natural assets. SOSE required information and data to better understand a place to be able to collaborate with clients and partners. SOSE Place Hub has extensive information, resources and tools to access and analyse data. The use of Power Bi was demonstrated, and workshops have been implemented to seek improvements of data provision to capture themes etc.
13. Board members queried interactions with external providers such as healthcare providers, educational services and social services and were assured that partnership meetings had been held including local authority, action community groups, planning community boards and locality hubs. Relationships would improve with time, and it was hoped to introduce the local economy and encourage local business representatives to attend meetings.
14. An update was provided on Moat Brae: discussions had been undertaken with the liquidator to find a solution – hopefully in the private sector. The Dumfries and Galloway Mental Health Association were still seeking other premises. Board members will be kept updated on Moat Brae.

AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION

15. SOSE's Head of Agricultural Transition and Strategic Lead for Food and Drink Supply Chain Transition attended Board to give an introduction to SOSE's Agricultural Transition Strategy and gave a presentation on the strategic food and drink opportunity in the South of Scotland.
16. SOSE had developed strategic partnerships with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS) to support and develop opportunities in the agricultural sector in the South of Scotland.
17. The presentation envisioned Scotland in 2045 as a Good Food Nation, home to renewable energy, agri-tech and green freight. The future of food production and supply would be led by nutritional demand supported by a Data co-op and data gathering to improve all areas of the supply chain.
18. Data sensing and ownership were fundamental to inclusive sustainable growth and wealth creation in South of Scotland's Agri food supply chain transition to net zero.
19. Innovative support was being piloted, and strategic partnerships and stakeholders were being built. Successes included SOSE engagement that had supported onshoring of processing capacity with Arla, Rowan Glen and Pickstock.
20. The next steps involved establishing demand for data supply chain investment, followed by focusing on skills, capacity, and innovation.
21. Board members understood the data-driven approach, which included data co-operative, data sensors, cloud-based data control, and segregation of data. SOSE was already working with Smart Rural, thus planning to scale this approach across the region.
22. Caution was recommended due to existing data projects in some sectors and industries being protective over data. There were also sensitivities regarding some data points and ownership of data – there was a risk of pests and diseases from a UK risk perspective.
23. A Board member declared a conflict of interest as Chairman of SAOS and emphasised the importance of data for businesses in rural areas. Data should discover unique selling points, drive efficiencies, and be owned by co-ops to deliver value within farming.
24. The project aimed to retain and increase margins in the South of Scotland and support the region's agricultural transition.
25. Board members were supportive of the approach.

OPERATING PLAN

26. SOSE's Head of Strategy, Planning and Partnership gave a presentation on the sixth Annual Operating Plan and sought endorsement of the proposed approach. A recap was provided on the areas of focus and direction. Board members were informed of the timeline and next steps. A fully designed draft would be circulated to Board members for comment no later than 19 March and a final Operating Plan would be shared with Scottish Government and uploaded to the website on 31 March 2025.
27. All Board members were content with the proposed approach.

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND RISK APPETITE ANNUAL REFRESH

28. SOSE's Head of Governance and Assurance, Data Protection Officer, gave a summary of the key elements on the risk management framework and informed two further risks would be added: one on the issues around the new strategic direction for SOSE and another on the risks to Shared Services and the future of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) which may impact SOSE. There was also note of Scottish Government's plan to move into an Oracle environment which was a direct risk to SOSE.
29. The Acting Director of Place and Enterprise and Interim Director of Finance and Corporate Resources would be attending a strategic review with EIS in April.

Decision	<p>Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed and noted the refreshed Corporate Risk Register (CRR) for 2025-26• Reviewed and noted the updated PESTELS (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal and Security) – for external environment scanning in 2025-26.• Agreed the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) proposal of no change to SOSE's Risk Appetite and approved no increases or decreases in risk appetite or changes to statements were required for 2025-26.
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HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

30. The Health and Safety Report had been circulated to Board members for information, and it was formally noted. There had been a low level of incidents and low-level risks. There was a large uptake in the emergency first aid training course. The Property Board did an excellent job picking up internally on issues and ensuring safety.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEES

- The Just Transition Committee would no longer meet. A new Committee would be set up by Alistair Cameron and the Chair – a safe space for staff and Board members to review projects. Duncan would join this committee.
- Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) – Mary would Chair, Paul would remain in ARC and Anna would join ARC. Viv Cockburn will remain an adviser to ARC for a handover period.
- People and Organisational Development Committee (POD) – Helen would continue to Chair, Paul would remain in POD and Emma would join POD (Mary would step down from POD)
- Regional Economic Partnership (REP) – Duncan and Rory attended REP and Anna was requested to attend REP for 6 months in Kirsten's absence.

CELEBRATING SOSE'S IMPACT

31. SOSE's Head of Communications and Marketing informed Board members of work being undertaken to maximise the opportunity to celebrate 5 years of SOSE to inspire, encourage and showcase the drive of economic growth in South of Scotland,
32. Key messages would include achievements, press releases, key announcements, impact statistics, case studies and testimonies through video and imagery.
33. Recommendations included:
- asking other people to say how well SOSE have done
 - selection of case studies that are dialled in to the support and expertise of SOSE rather than the funding aspect
 - acknowledging challenges that have been overcome
 - use the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre (MTBIC) as an example of having listened to the community
 - inform of themes still being worked on such as transport and housing – long journeys but SOSE are on those journeys
 - show humility, celebrate and use humour and big personalities.

UPDATE ON PATHWAYS PILOT

34. SOSE's Pathways Project Manager attended to provide a presentation on the pilot project which had been delivering since September 2024 and ends on 31 March 2025. The project provided enterprise support to women and other under-represented groups. The

presentation illustrated the spread of grants across the region and feedback from clients on the coaches had been excellent.

35. There had been positive engagement with Business Gateway and the team had done an exceptional job with very positive feedback also from Scottish Government on their success in such short timescale.
36. Board members recommended more collaboration with land-based sectors, land-based engineering companies, forestry and construction where women were under-represented.

A.O.B.

Project Sparling

37. The Chair informed of a new project in collaboration with the Dairy Growth Board, Rowan Glen and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) looking at usage for surfeit Scottish milk to supply Morocco where there was a demand for a high value cream yoghurt. Rowan Glen would develop the product. The factory was situated on a small estuary with a burn where Sparling fish were found and were a protected species along with long eared newts. SAOS were undertaking a feasibility study, and it was expected that Scottish Government support of a £10m food grant would be provided and there would be a need for PPC (Pollution, Prevention and Control) licensing, equipment and capital costs.
38. At present 25,000 litres of surfeit milk entered the burn each day from the factory but this would increase to 25m litres a day, so the first stage was the feasibility study. Updates would be provided.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

39. The Forward Plan was provided.

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

40. 09 May 2025 @ The Haining, Selkirk (tbc)