



Locally-Led Destination Development Meeting  
Hawick, Denholm and Hermitage:  
Heart of Hawick, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, 11.30-13.30  
Summary of meeting

Attendees:

| <u>First Name</u> | <u>Surname</u> | <u>Company</u>                                |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Keith             | Mundell        | Johnstons Of Elgin                            |
| Helene            | Sinclair       | VisitScotland                                 |
| Mavis             | Kent           | Tower Hotel                                   |
| Malcolm           | Dickson        | Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park |
| Catherine         | Elliott-Walker | Hawick Reivers Association ( Volunteer Group) |
| colin             | hope           | Future Hawick (Hawick Development Trust )     |
| Carol             | Shanley        | Branxholme Castle Ltd                         |
| Claire            | Mactaggart     | Tiny Home Borders                             |
| David             | Mactaggart     | Tiny Home Borders                             |
| Euan              | Welsh          | EJW Media                                     |
| Barbara           | Elborn         | Newcastleton Community Trust                  |
| Karen             | Gateson        |   |
| Vicky             | Hawes          | Newcastleton Community Trust                  |
| Marianne          | Bailey         | Independent                                   |
| Carly             | Anderson       | Stouslie Snugs Luxury Farm Glamping           |
| Lara              | Porter         | Eskdale Community Hub and Old School Cafe     |
| Derick            | Tait           | Future Hawick (Hawick Development Trust )     |
| Gordon            | Muir           | Gordon Design                                 |
| David             | Hope-Jones     | SSDA  |
| Sarah             | MacDonald      | SSDA  |

Lead SSDA business contact in AREA: Sarah/Gowan, email and telephone

## Purpose of meeting:

This meeting, hosted by the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), was one of 14 in-person and 13 digital meetings taking place across the South of Scotland. Full details can be found at: [www.ssdalliance.com/destination-development/](http://www.ssdalliance.com/destination-development/)

The meetings have been arranged to allow local tourism organisations to be able to:

- Feed into the development of the South of Scotland **Responsible Tourism Strategy** which will underpin the work of all related agencies, including SOSE, Visit Scotland, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council and SSDA.
- Feed into a local and regional plan for **extending the visitor season**.
- Decide **how the local area should be marketed** – specifically, what content should be on the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ website and what should go into the commissioning brief of a new promotional film about the local area.
- Agree how to **raise awareness locally of the ‘Scotland Starts Here’** brand and assets, so it supports local businesses.
- Agree **actionable points which the SSDA can advance in the next six months to meaningfully support local businesses**.
- Share and build **new local collaborations** between local businesses.



This is part of the SSDA’s commitment to being as locally-led as possible, as it looks to both market the South of Scotland and support, represent and connect-up businesses engaged in the visitor economy.

## Input to Responsible Tourism Strategy:

### Intro:

The first hour of the meeting was spent supporting those attending to feed into the development of the South of Scotland’s new Responsible Tourism Strategy. You can learn more about the Strategy and the different ways you can take part in the consultations [here](#).

The meeting used Mentimeter as a digital tool to ensure that everyone present had the same ability to share their own views and vote on the points that mean most to them. This allowed the SSDA to be as inclusive, transparent and accountable as possible.

### Local input:

You can view the full results of the meeting’s input to the development of the South of Scotland’s Responsible Tourism Strategy by [CLICKING HERE](#) (click right and left arrows to navigate the different questions, and scroll up and down to see all the responses to each question).



## How to Market and Represent the area:

### Intro:

The SSDA is active in marketing all of the South of Scotland and uses the economies of scale of a 'pan-south' approach to ensure we are able to have the punch-through the region needs to be heard. This involves, for example:

- bringing in journalists, influencers and other media to secure national and international coverage for the region, at least every month;
- working with the Travel Trade to represent the South of Scotland at all relevant international travel expos;
- running the consumer-facing 'Scotland Starts Here' [website](#), [app](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and other social media channels;
- running the 'South-West Coast 300' route, including its [webpages](#), social media and developing and distributing printed maps (as requested by local businesses);
- securing significant global accolades for the region, including having the South of Scotland named [Lonely Planet's 'Best in Travel 2023'](#) and a [prestigious UCI Bike Destination](#).

However, we recognise that in addition to this 'pan-south' work, we also want to remain true to the *local*. We want to tell an authentic local story of place within the 'Scotland Starts Here' website, so we are creating landing webpages for 14 different parts of the destination and giving a high degree of local autonomy as to how each of these areas are represented. This approach has come from specific requests for a greater degree of local identity within the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand.

### Local input:

We asked how businesses and the community wanted the local area represented. The following points came up in the discussion:

### Hawick:

- Living history: Reivers Festival, Common Ridings, Alchemy Film Festival.
- Made in Hawick
- **People: as a Welcome Host, visitors could speak to anyone they wanted (not always the case elsewhere)**
- **Our hospitality: the people not just the pie and chips (the volunteers, the full package). It's the essence of the communities you buy into.**
- **People have to be happy and proud of where they live. Really important the council see that's important and make sure that the communities are happy. "Nobody wants to visit a miserable bunch of folk"!**
- **Quality manufacturing historic and present: Famously Hawick, Made in Hawick", woollen mills and brewery**
- **Ancestry, ancestral tourism, relics, family names Elliots, Dickson, Nicholsons, Kerrs across region**
- **Links between heritage and landscape is very strong "our history is carved into landscape" the perfect example being iron hill forts, need to sell these as product**
- Historic castle- Branxholme Castle older than Edinburgh castle – 600 year old fire place
- Drumlanrig's Tower – peel tower in middle of town
- Heritage – the Heritage Hub is really good – visitors can trace their own ancestry
- Drove roads
- **Hornshole Story & Common Riding**
- **Reivers Festival**
- **Songs and ballads (including accent, storytelling and contemporary culture)**
- **People - world champion sportspeople, & Nobel prize winners**

- **Diverse Eco Landscape**
- **Biggest Burns Club**
- **Rugby Stars**
- **The Hawick Dialect**
- **Wilton Lodge Park**
- **Accessible Natural Resources**
- **1st Ever Electric Town in Scotlan**
- **Spelling of 'Tweed'**
- **Oldest Common Riding**
- **Home of Cashmere**
- **Textiles & Knitwear**
- **Riding designation - Globetrotters recognition**
- **Alchemy Film Festival**
- **Storytelling about locals by locals**
- **More songs in praise of town than Heaven**

#### **Newcastleton:**

- *[Many of the above points are also true for Newcastleton as a lot in common with Hawick]*
- **Artifacts**
- **3 famous people – 1 designed the plough**
- **Genealogy – can search local roots by surname – Recently had 170 people across from America for the Elliot clan gathering. Also Nixon, Nicholson, etc.**
- **Living history and heritage**
- **Newcastleton a “planned village”, history of the crofter. Unique crofting arrangement as families displaced for sheep. Each house has 1 acre on the hill.**
- **The concept of common land a local legacy, leading the way in community buy outs (eg Langholm).**

#### **Rule Water Valley:**

- **Demo project – Twelve Towers of Rule – a day in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Henry VIII sent huge army and destroyed the towers**
- **Cycling and walking tours**
- **Archeology**

#### **Eskdale:**

- **Spiritual place**
- **Ancient and archaeological remains (interest from Archaeology Scotland – survey of the Esk)**
- **Unique story about the common land**
- **Iron age and forts and trails**
- **Sammy Ling; monastic**
- **Cultural with Sculpture**
- **Strong sense of community**
- **Recently a YouTube influencer made good video.**
- **Video footage available (iscotland?)**

We also asked if any local businesses/community leaders wanted to volunteer to help develop the specific content for the area: Gordon Muir, Euan Welsh, Carol Shanley and Keith Mundell all volunteered.

#### Next steps/actions:

Within the next few weeks, the SSDA will commission a 60-90 second marketing video for the area, based around the above local input we received. This video will be produced within the next year (depending on the season local businesses want represented) by a professional videographer.

By the time we next meet in Hawick, we will have the 14 area webpages live on the 'Scotland Starts Here' website and local businesses can review this and feed into the content and layout, to ensure it accurately reflects how they feel the local area should be represented.

#### **Extending the Season:**

##### Intro:

The SSDA has been asked by businesses and communities across the South of Scotland to help extend the visitor season. Too many tell us that they have a thriving business for eight weeks a year, a slow business in the shoulder seasons, and then have to close in the winter. We currently have one of the shortest visitor seasons anywhere in Scotland and this has various knock-on effects, including making it harder to recruit and retain staff if we cannot offer year-round employment.

This is a complex and multi-faceted challenge. It is an incredibly hard nut to crack but we passionately believe that, by working collaboratively together, and by strategically focusing a proportionate amount of destination marketing spend on the promoting the region out of season, we can begin to make progress.

But there is little value in unthinkingly promoting the region out of season, only for visitors to find that businesses aren't open and product aren't there. This is why we are having these in-person meetings across the region: to ask organisations what is open when, what appetite there is to change this, what products could bring in more visitors at quieter times, and how we could better facilitate collaboration to ensure businesses that choose to stay open longer do so without making a loss.

In support of this, the SSDA is committing £60k this year to a seasonality campaign and we will ensure that its design and implementation is informed by what local businesses have told us.

##### Local Input:

These were some of the key points in the discussion about how we could strengthen the local tourism offer out of the summer season:

- **Famously Hawick is one of the best kept secrets – help support marketing**
- **Brewery**
- **Dark Skies**
- **The Hawick Reivers Festival was created to extend season. Starts the visitor season in March.**
- **There are currently 9 festivals n Hawick. Could this be extended to 12, so year round?**
- **Develop the equestrian offering, develop the riding/experiences when racing season/national hunt not on. Need to get the landowners onside.**
- **Develop relationship with Globetrotters – common ridings are now on their website**
- **Important to keep fighting for access to newly forested areas**

### Next steps/actions:

Informed by the above local information, input and priorities, the SSDA will move quickly to agree a marketing strategy for a Seasonality Campaign which we will run between now and the Spring. We will have a digital meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> September (10am) to share information and plans for the campaign, seek further input, and explain how businesses can get involved. It will be a collaborative campaign which we invite any and all to get involved with. We will then have monthly digital meetings to continue to keep businesses engaged, informed and feeding back.

In February, when we next meet the local businesses we will present on how the campaign was run, what evidence of impact there was, and we will start planning for the 2024/25 off-season.

## **'Scotland Starts Here' Branding**

### Intro:

Over the last three years the SSDA has created a strong, award-winning consumer-facing brand, 'Scotland Starts Here', with a website, app and social media presence. The social media channels raise awareness and sell the region; the website helps people plan visits; and the app is a brilliant tool to help guide and inform visitors when they are in the region.

These assets can only help power the visitor economy if people know about them, especially when they arrive in the region. 'Scotland Starts Here' needs to be a collective and collaborative endeavour: it needs to be owned by all businesses and every community in the region.

If we all shout "Scotland Starts Here" loud enough and if everyone knows to steer visitors with questions to the website and app, we can really use these tools to support businesses and improve the visitor experience.

Having agreed how we want this area represented on 'Scotland Starts Here', the meeting discussed how best to raise aware of the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand and assets locally in the area, to ensure it's really working for local businesses.

### Next steps/actions:

Everyone attending was encouraged to take the free collateral available (A4 posters, A3 posters and freestanding 'table talkers') which had QR codes directing visitors to the 'Scotland Starts Here' website, as well as branded lapel badges. The SSDA can offer as much of such collateral as is useful to build awareness and engagement locally – this is probably best done by having a local hub where we can store items, for local collection. Everyone was asked to put these posters up wherever they think is most visible for visitors.

Over the coming six months, the SSDA is keen to work with the businesses and communities to get the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand visible in this area, and across the South of Scotland, as well as giving increased ownership locally of the information about the local area which appears on the website and app. The SSDA is keen to also have permanent, physical signs, including on roads and railways, to ensure our shared 'Scotland Starts Here' brand and assets, really are supporting the visitor economy.

## Local Priorities:

### Intro:

The SSDA is keen to be honest about the amount of capacity it has: a total of five staff members, with a huge area to cover and over a dozen different areas of responsibility relating to tourism. While much of our work is focused on 'pan-south' benefits, we are keen to also dedicate some capacity to responding to local priorities in the 14 different areas within the South of Scotland. We therefore asked all 14 areas if there were local priorities (beyond the strategy, seasonality work and local promotion already discussed) they would like the SSDA to support in the coming six months in each of these series of in-person meetings.

### Local Input:

The following local priorities/actions were identified through discussion:

- 1. Send details of how Hawick Reivers can be on SSH website and links with the Heritage themes**
- 2. Support Newcastleton and Eskdale's work to increase access. Learn from Eskdale Moor**
- 3. As we all buy-into and use the Scotland Starts Here brand, important that there is guaranteed longevity for this with long term financial security so everyone is confident we're in it for the long-term. Time and support given to another consultation, will the SSDA be around to take forward?**
- 4. Support the case that is being made that windfarm money should be focused on local community use.**
- 5. Ask the Council to take down the UCI signs.**
- 6. Get the Scotland Starts Here brand and collateral south of the border – visible in Carlisle Tourist Info etc.**
- 7. Get the South of Scotland more visible in the Visit Scotland Tourist Information on the Royal Mile.**
- 8. Explore partnership with DFDS to raise the profile of Scotland Starts Here on the ferries.**

### Next steps/actions:

With just a small fraction of one staff member able to respond to each of the 14 areas' priorities, we need to manage expectations as to what is possible but we absolutely hope to be able to report tangible progress against the locally identified priorities in the next meeting at Hawick, which will take place in February 2024.