

**Locally-Led Destination Development Meeting  
Kelso, Jedburgh & districts, 16th August 2023, 18:00 – 20:00  
Summary of meeting**

**Attendees:**

- Lesley Rosher, Visit Kelso
- Helene Sinclair, VisitScotland
- Sue Beck, Hendersyde
- Lynne Jobes, Beirhope Alpacas
- Marianne Bailey
- Jennifer Mac, Unique Cottages
- Gus Russell, Kelso Community Council
- Lucy Tile, Bairnkine Cottages
- Catherine Bauer, Treetop Toys LTD
- Colin Henderson, Kelso Heritage Society
- June Swan, Swans Shoes
- Adrian Clarkson, The Old Smithy, Ednam
- Anne SCOTT, One Basket, Kelso
- Lisa Haig, The Cookie Kitchen
- Andrew Keen, Bread Oven Cottage Self Catering
- Sue Keen, Bread Oven Cottage Self Catering
- Ali Russell, General Stag's
- Ian Hird, the Kelso pottery
- Lisa Seccombe, Inglestone House
- Adam Gregg, Coldstream holiday park
- Matt Thompson, Floors Castle
- Muhammad Adnan, Sparkle hardware ltd
- Dr Paul Homoky, Health For Life
- Kirsty Shaw, Smailholm Mains Holiday cottage
- Bill Cleghorn
- Mark Rowley, SOSE
- David Hope-Jones, SSDA
- Gowan Miller, SSDA

**Lead SSDA business contact in Kelso, Jedburgh & districts:**

Gowan Miller, [gowan@ssdalliance.com](mailto:gowan@ssdalliance.com), 07815 316 365

**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.





- Social media- YouTube training could more be available
- Border Events- now gone, where are events now listed? How do businesses find out about those?
- Event organisers need to understand lead time so businesses can plan. Also, how do we all support the sharing of events.
- Have the bookability available live on the site- can we integrate booking systems?

#### Kelso, Jedburgh and districts specific

- 4 years until Kelso Abbey is 900 years old/ Heritage
- Need the visitor information centre back
- SBC Planning- owners gave up as too onerous.

#### Next steps/actions:

Every single word shared by attendees through Menti and the additional notes has been passed to an independent company which is collating all findings and will make recommendations on what should be in the strategy based on what was said through all the consultations. We will make public all the Menti data from all the meetings, so you can see what the 13 other in-person meetings said across the region, as well as what came up in the 13 digital meetings and the one-to-one meetings.

In the autumn, we will share the draft strategy, alongside all the results from the consultations, so those who took part can directly see how their views fed into the draft. We will invite input to the draft as it continues to develop in the autumn and will only proceed if we feel we have broad-based support from not just the public agencies involved but also the businesses, key organisations and communities. If there is consensus, we plan to launch the strategy at the start of 2024.

In the spring, when we next meet the local businesses the Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area, we will formally present the final Responsible Tourism Strategy, highlighting which key points from their local input went into the strategy and discuss opportunities as to how local businesses and communities can be involved in its delivery.

### **How to Market and Represent the Kelso, Jedburgh and districts 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:

In the Kelso meeting, we asked how businesses and the community wanted Kelso, Jedburgh and districts represented. The following points came up in the discussion:

- **Slow people down – embrace slow tourism**
- **Show the town square, with cobbles, as an attractive and historic centre, with independent shops**
- **Show the rivers**
- **Activities: golf, ice rink – curling, walking, cycling, get off the beaten track/sense of adventure; go for an experience;**
- **People: all ages including young families with children**
- **Vibrant**
- **Celebrate country roads – 'we don't do motorways'**
- **Fewer midges!**
- **Immersive experiences**
- **Local rugby players**
- **Health tourism and wellness (local clinic attracts 100 people into the area a week)**
- **Challenge: How do young people get here if limited public transport? But recognise no.67 bus is often empty.**
- **Frustrating to call 'Cheviot' as a hill in England – could we use 'Roxburghshire'?**

We also asked if any local businesses/community leaders wanted to volunteer to help develop the specific content for the Kelso area: Andy & Sue Keen and Gus Russell volunteered.

#### Next steps/actions:

Within the next few weeks, the SSDA will commission a 60-90 second marketing video for the Kelso, Jedburgh and districts 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 Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area we will have the Kelso, Jedburgh and districts webpage 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:

This is the input we had from the Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area meeting, with regards HOW we should market the region in the off-season:

- **Promote the ice rink and curling**
- **Dark skies**
- **Trees – show the autumnal beauty**
- **Wild garlic in the Spring**
- **Push shorter breaks (we were 'Scotland's leading short break destination)**
- **Alpacas – open all year**
- **Target those that come to look at the big houses and have marketing in Bamburgh, Seehouses and other busy areas just out of region – show the quality we can offer**
- **Perthshire does autumn well – emulate them**
- **Look at the demographics of who is clicking on links**
- **Analogue options for non-tech. visitors - how do we reach those visitor's? Town maps**

#### 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 the spring, when we next meet the local businesses at Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area 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 Kelso, Jedburgh and districts 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.

#### Local Input:

The Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area meeting felt that the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand could be locally promoted by:

- **Ensure businesses have digital copies of the brand and assets, so they can put on their websites**
- **Have Scotland Starts Here window stickers for local businesses**
- **Have a map/sign in the centre of Kelso**
- **Roadsigns**
- **Funny viral videos (e.g. someone hit in the face with a golf ball flying off a salmon, to give a sense that Scotland Starts Here)**
- **Some confusion about the two brands SSDA and SSH**
- **Ensure all relevant events are on Scotland Starts Here**
- **Have more/regular/better communications with local businesses**
- **Are we targeting Scotland or England? How do we make it clearer to Eng+ Sco visitors- is the message the same to both groups of visitors.**

#### 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 Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area, and across the South of Scotland, as well as giving increased ownership locally of the information about Kelso, Jedburgh and districts 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 were identified through discussion:

- 1) Give more/better information about how events can be uploaded to 'Scotland Starts Here'.
- 2) Explore the idea of a physical map/sign/info point in the centre of Kelso to have tourist information.
- 3) Explore the idea of four Connected Maps- Kelso map showing Jed, Jed map shows Kelso etc.
- 4) Look to try and get more information in Guide Book people use, ideally with itineraries which include Kelso

### 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 Kelso, Jedburgh and districts area, which will take place in February 2024.