



James Hutton Tercentenary South of Scotland Partnership

July 2025

Strategic Intent:

The South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) / *Scotland Starts Here*, James Hutton Institute, Edinburgh Geological Society (EGS), Scottish Geology Trust (SGT), Geowalks, Scottish Borders Council (SBC), South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), and VisitScotland, will work together to support the James Hutton Tercentenary in June 2026 to maximise lasting benefit to the South of Scotland visitor economy.

By June 2026 we collectively aim to have:

- 1) A 'Deep Time Trail' to Siccar Point, with appropriate parking, signage and safe access.
- 2) A high-quality visitor offering with inspiring interpretation across physical signs and audio/digital story-telling.
- 3) Coordinated and impactful marketing which inspires people to visit Berwickshire, encouraging and supporting them to stay in the South of Scotland, exploring further and spending more.

Beyond June 2026, we aspire to have:

- 4) Refreshed existing panels & hub structure at Cockburnspath and along the Coastal Path, to guide visitors to Siccar Point on foot.

Strategic context:

James Hutton is a key part of the South of Scotland's story; he was a resident and farmer in Berwickshire and is the founder of modern geology. He was a polymath, hugely influential in the development of modern agriculture, a founder of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and an innovative industrialist, canal builder, naturalist and physician.

Siccar Point on the Berwickshire coast is one of the most significant locations in the history of geological sciences. It is an unconformity, a geological feature that represents a significant time gap and helped Hutton illustrate his theory that rocks are formed slowly by natural processes, that are ongoing today and will continue ceaselessly into the future. This ultimately led to the concept of Deep Time and our modern understanding of how the Earth works.

The world will celebrate the 300th anniversary of James Hutton's birth in June 2026, along with a number of other tercentenaries associated with the Scottish Enlightenment. This is a key opportunity to inspire new generations by the story of James Hutton, the global significance of Siccar Point, and to encourage more people to visit and stay in the South of Scotland.

Siccar Point was awarded Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status in 1961 which means it is afforded certain protections, which are managed by NatureScot in Scotland, under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

There have been several years of planning around the Hutton Tercentenary, led by the James Hutton Institute. In 2024 the Edinburgh Geological Society commissioned CMC Associates to develop the plans for improved interpretation at Siccar Point. This led to the proposed Deep Time Trail, a 1.3 km walking path from the nearest road. The Scottish Geology Trust is organising a Crowdfunder to raise money to build the Deep Time Trail, with consultant Caroline Gould leading the planning of this. The Crowdfunder will launch on 15 September 2025.

The SSDA, VisitScotland, SOSE, Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council are lead agencies in the delivery of the South of Scotland [Responsible Tourism Strategy](#) (2023-33) which will increase the value of the South's visitor economy by £1bn and support 20,000 jobs. A key lever to achieving this economic growth is increasing the number of higher-spending international visitors to the South of Scotland. The James Hutton Tercentenary is seen as a key opportunity to support the delivery of the Responsible Tourism Strategy; there is therefore strong collective interest in working collaboratively to maximise the lasting economic impact.

Our collective challenge is to tell the James Hutton story with sufficient passion and energy, in interactive, immersive and engaging ways, to appeal to a wide, generalist audience and to inspire international visitors interested in geology to visit the South of Scotland. We need to explain why the rocks at Siccar Point are key to how we understand ourselves as a species and the planet we live on.

Key Contacts:

Organisation	Name	Title
James Hutton Institute	Colin Campbell	CEO
Edinburgh Geological Society	Robert Gatliff	Chair of Promotion and Coordination Group
Edinburgh Geological Society (and Geowalks)	Angus Miller	Promotion Coordinator
CMC Associates	Elaine Clark	Interpretation professional
CMC Associates	Sharyn Emslie	Director
Scottish Geology Trust	Caroline Gould	Crowdfunder Development Officer
South of Scotland Destination Alliance	David Hope-Jones	CEO
Scottish Borders Council	Jane Warcup	Team Leader Events, Tourism and Business
Scottish Borders Council	Gillian Douglas	Economic Development Officer
Scottish Borders Council	Denise Brydon	Senior Active Travel and Access Officer
VisitScotland	Gordon Smith	Destination Developmet Director
South of Scotland Enterprise	Mark Rowley	Tourism Strategy

Pillars of work:

There are broadly four pillars of work in this partnership:

1) Deep Time Trail: physical access and signage:

Objectives:

By August 2026: - Planning application submitted

By Sep 2026: - Crowdfunder launched

By Nov 2026: - Secured key funding for the Deep Time Trail

By June 2026 (Phase 1):

- Improved parking provision at start of Deep Time Trail
- 1.3km Deep Time Trail formally established to Siccar Point viewpoint
 - Future maintenance of footpath and infrastructure agreed
 - Footpath signage and interpretation in place for the Deep Time Trail
 - Road signage to the Siccar Point parking in place
 - Process, timescales and funding agreed for phase two

By June 2027 (Phase 2):

- Deep Time Trail and Siccar Point tied into wider path network with refreshed signage at Cockburnspath and along the coast
- Steps from Siccar Point viewpoint (cliff top) down to shore completed

Responsibilities:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| - Scottish Geology Trust | - Crowdfunding campaign |
| - EGS | - Project manage trail development |
| - CMC Associates | - Design and installation of the Deep Time Trail |
| - Scottish Borders Council | - Support planning application & future maintenance |
| - SSDA, VS, SOSE | - Support development and promotion of trail |

Challenges:

- Timescales for securing funding
- Timescales for securing planning permission: danger of delaying construction of physical infrastructure
- Land use permission with Dunglass Estate and land agents (Savilles)
- Timescales for completing work (esp given traditional stone working)

Actions complete by next meeting (30 July '25):

- EGS meet with Dunglass Estate, with formal agreement on land use
- CMC Associates completed concept stage planning
- EGS draft planning application
- Hutton Stone Co. approached (but they are unlikely to be able to provide the right stone for our purposes)
- Fundraising Crowdfunder ready for 15th September launch
- SSDA and others fed into and supporting Crowdfunder
- Funding application ready for Fallago Environment Trust
- SOSE approached about possible funding

2) Deep Time Trail: story-telling:

Objectives:

By June 2026:

-
- Deep Time Trail delivered, with high quality physical interpretation guiding visitors along the path to Siccar Point
 - Integrated digital content developed and promoted (soundscape, audio content, virtual tour and animation)
 - James Hutton story-telling in the media and marketed to key audience
 - Further online content developed for a wider, online audience to inspire interest in Hutton and Siccar Point

Responsibilities:

- EGS, SGT, JHI: - Securing funding for Deep Time Trail
- EGS, SGT, JHI: - Collating existing assets and key facts
- EGS /CMC Associates - Deliver Deep Time Trail
- SSDA - Lead with associated media and marketing (if funded)
- SSDA - Lead on development of wider online content (if funded)

Challenges:

- Securing funding for high-quality interpretation (physical and digital)

Actions complete by next meeting (Aug '25):

- CMC Associates develop plans for site interpretation.
- Fundraising crowdfunder ready for launch
- SSDA and others fed into and supporting crowdfunder
- Funding application ready for Fallago Environment Trust
- SOSE approached about possible funding
- SSDA able to advise on further digital content development

3) Tercentenary celebrations:

Objectives:

By June 2026: - Siccar Point a key part of global tercentenary celebrations.

Responsibilities:

EGS, SGT, JHI: Coordinate wider tercentenary celebrations
SSDA, VS, SBC: Support media and marketing

Challenges:

- Lack of time to June 2026
- A number of other competing anniversaries in 2026

Actions complete by next meeting (Aug '25):

- Clear plan as for the Tercentenary and where the Deep Time Trail fits into this

4) Business engagement & coordinated visitor offering

Objectives:

- By July 2025: - Visitor econ. businesses approached digitally, inviting engagement
- By Nov 2026 - In-person meeting with local visitor economy businesses
- By June 2026: - Deep Time Trail integrated into the existing businesses' offerings
 - Local visitor econ. Businesses are promoting the Trail
 - New/developed visitor product, including boat tours
 - Active destination marketing around the tercentenary
 - Targeting of north American market
 - Visitors are encouraged and supported to stay/spend in the area

Responsibilities:

- SSDA: Lead with local businesses engagement/outreach
- VS, SBC, SOSE: Support local businesses engagement/outreach
- SSDA & VS: Lead with consumer marketing and product building

Actions complete by next meeting (Aug '25):

- SSDA has webpage and video on its B2B website, also pushed on socials
- SOSE and VS help identify local businesses
- All relevant local businesses digitally engaged by SSDA