



# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL COUNCIL PLAN

FROM APRIL 2025

# Foreword by the Council Leader.

As we present the Scottish Borders Council Plan for April 2025, we do so against the backdrop of a challenging fiscal environment. The increased demand on our services, coupled with reducing budgetary envelopes, has necessitated some tough decisions. These decisions, however, have not been made in isolation. They have been informed by our communities through extensive community conversations, ensuring that our actions reflect the needs and priorities of those we serve.

Throughout these conversations, several key priorities have emerged. Our residents have highlighted the need for improved infrastructure and transport connections, access to housing, and the availability of skills and job opportunities. The Plan responds to these issues, setting out the Council's commitment to upgrading our transport networks, acting on our declaration of a housing emergency by supporting the creation of new homes, and supporting skills development and economic development opportunities in our communities. Ultimately, this is your Council Plan: it brings together your priorities and our responsibility as Scottish Borders Council to serve those living in the region.

Despite the fiscal constraints, I am immensely proud of what we are delivering. Our initiatives in education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability are making a tangible difference in the lives of our residents. For example, we have successfully piloted an innovative demand responsive transport system to improve connectivity for rural locations in the Region, our new YELL strategy will ensure that the voices of children and young people are at the heart of our decision-making as an organisation, and our work with South of Scotland Enterprise and partners has supported 'Center Parcs' announcing proposals for development in the Scottish Borders as their first location in Scotland.

We recognise the significant opportunities presented by partnerships such as the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deals, the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, and the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland Regional Prosperity Framework. Additionally, our £20M Levelling Up Partnership with the UK and Scottish Governments, provides essential funding to unlock the economic potential of Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick and Jedburgh, while promising bold action on inequalities and improved physical connectivity more widely. These collaborations are crucial in driving forward our ambitious agenda and ensuring that the Scottish Borders continues to thrive.

However, the Council cannot achieve these goals alone. We rely on the support and cooperation of our partners, stakeholders, and the wider community. Together, we can navigate these challenging times and build a brighter future for all.

In conclusion, while the road ahead may be difficult, I am confident that by working together, we can overcome these challenges and deliver a prosperous and sustainable future for the Scottish Borders.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Euan Jardine', positioned above the printed name.

**Councillor Euan Jardine**  
Leader of Scottish Borders Council

# Introduction by the Chief Executive

Over the past three years, we have been developing a Council Plan which supports our journey to becoming the most agile and effective organisation we can be, capable of addressing long-term challenges and capitalising on opportunities in an ever-changing world.

Our goal is a Plan that:

- I. Is short and simple but clear in its actions and aims.
- II. Sets a strategic framework for Council decision-making and services reflected in the Council's Financial Plans.
- III. Correlates annual activity with long-term ambitions.
- IV. Is informed by strong engagement with local communities.
- V. Is monitored through effective Performance Management that allows us to build on what is working and to change what is not working well enough.

Page 5, 'Our Vision for 2033', outlines our long-term strategic ambitions for the Scottish Borders. These address complex issues that will require sustained efforts from the Council and our Community Planning Partners, over many years. They include a Just Transition to Net Zero, tackling Poverty, and improving Economic Productivity and Wages. Reflecting both the challenges and opportunities we face as a region, we project a vision for where we want to be by 2033.

This vision informs the actions we plan to implement across the Scottish Borders in 2025-2026, detailed in the 'Scottish Borders-Wide Actions' section. Future Council Plans will continue to build on this process, comprising steps towards the long-term realisation of our regional vision.

As is shown in 'What shapes the Council Plan' on page 4, our aim is to ensure that robust 'data and evidence' are the primary source for our decisions as a Council. In a new development in this year's Plan, we have sought to make this relationship more explicit by inserting an evidence page ahead of each of our themes in the Scottish Borders-wide section of the Plan. This new section creates links between evidence, our Strategic Outcomes ('what we seek to achieve'), our Actions, and our performance as a Council. As always, the Council Plan is heavily influenced by our past performance. Did we achieve what we set out to do? And did we meet the deadlines specified in the 'Target Date'? Last year, I'm pleased to report we accomplished most of the milestones outlined in the Council Plan. Seven of the milestones that were not achieved are included in this year's plan.

In the 'Locality Actions' section, we outline for each of the five 'localities' of the Scottish Borders clear ambitions, actions, and outcomes, similar to the 'Scottish Borders-Wide Actions' section for the entire region. Informed by this summer's Community Conversations and ongoing engagement through Place-making, our aim is for Locality Actions to resonate with 'People and Places' across the Scottish Borders by setting out the priorities for different communities, whether in Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot & Liddesdale, or Tweeddale.

There are three additional points to emphasise:

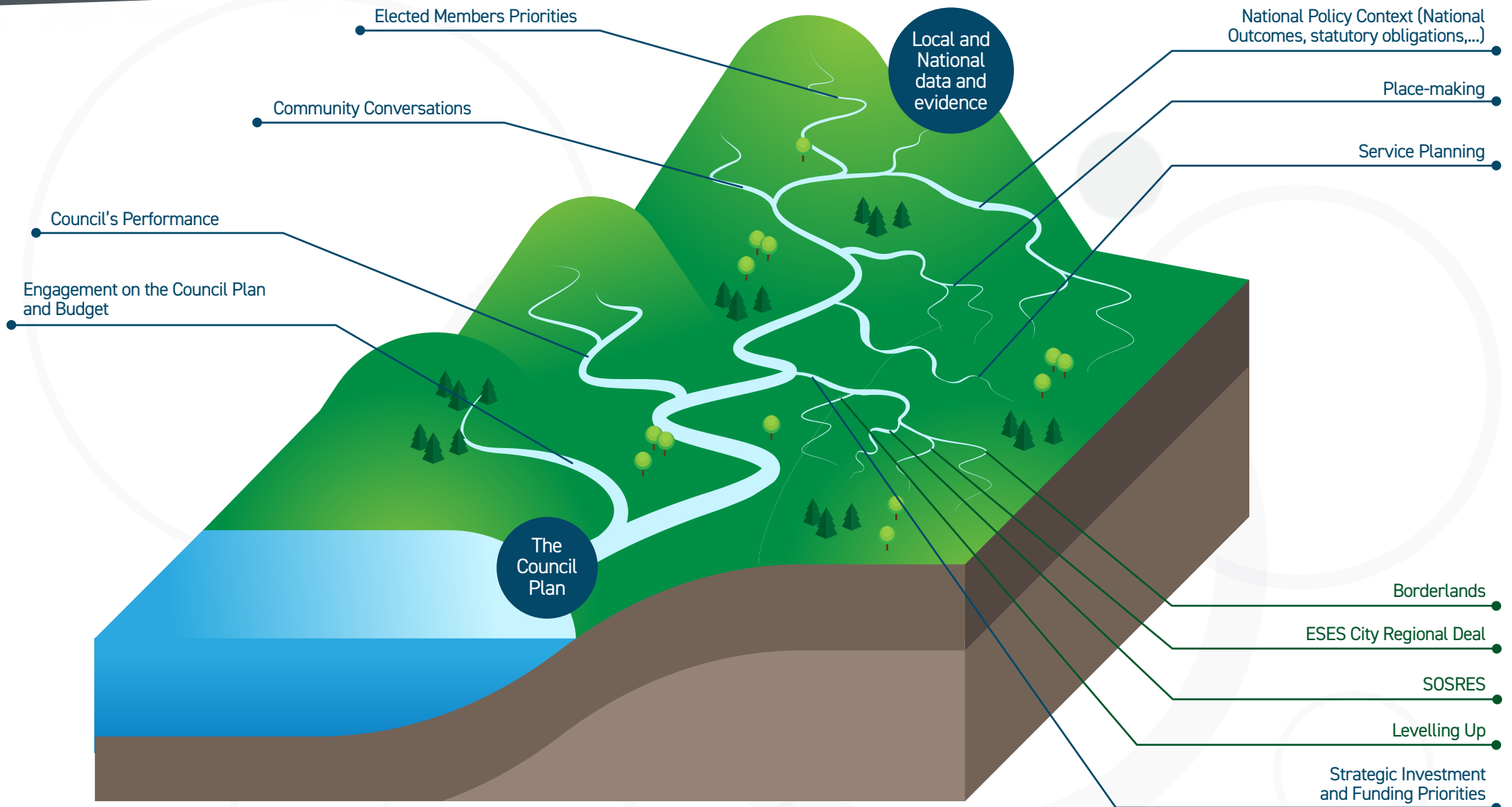
- Values are crucial. They help establish the culture we want to shape our decisions and actions. Our values, focusing on people, fairness, sustainability, and agility, resonate throughout the document and are outlined alongside our vision on page 5.
- The past few years, marked by a pandemic, global conflict, a cost-of-living crisis, and the escalating climate and nature crisis, have underscored that we are operating in an increasingly uncertain environment. To meet future challenges and seize new opportunities, the Council must continuously adapt and evolve.
- As the Council faces further pressures on its resources and ever-growing demands, it is increasingly evident that we must go much further in transforming the Council, how we collaborate with our partners, and, most importantly, how we empower and support our communities to achieve what matters to them. This plan sets out the next steps on that journey.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Robertson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**David Robertson**  
Chief Executive  
Scottish Borders Council

# What shapes the Council Plan



# Our Vision for 2033

## Our Values

### Agile

We take advantage of new opportunities to delivery good value for money, and we maximise the use of all digital opportunities.

### Sustainable

We are passionate about the prospects of future generations; we demonstrate this in our decisions and delivery and ensure we live within our means.

### People Focused

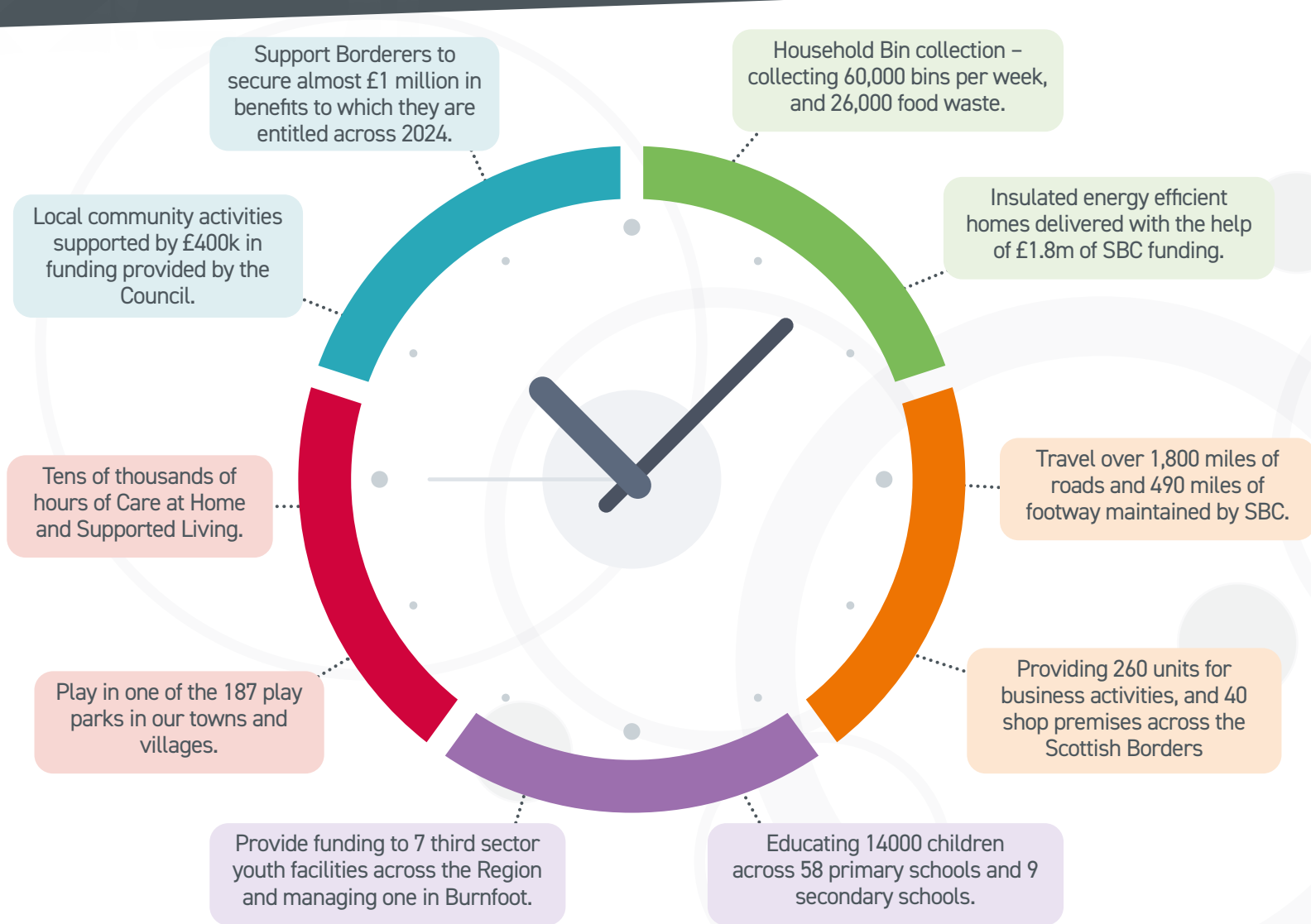
Working collaboratively with colleagues and partners, everything we do is for the benefit of our communities.

### Inclusive and Fair

We ensure everyone has the best opportunities and always seek to act fairly.



# Around the clock, people rely on the services provided by Scottish Borders Council.



## And much more ....

We deliver £370m worth of services annually and will deliver a capital investment plan in the Borders of £454m over the next 10 years.

We maintain 13 flood protection schemes across the region in responding to the effects of climate change and extreme weather events.

We promote biodiversity and nature restoration across 44ha hectares of greenspace.

We supported 397 victims of domestic abuse in 2023/24.

We invested £1.45 million of Shared Prosperity Funding in local projects in 2023/24.

We employ 45 Modern Apprentices to provide more local work opportunities within the Council.

We support 28 bus contracts, spend £1.3m on bus services, with over 800,000 passenger journeys on the supported services alone.



# SCOTTISH BORDERS-WIDE ACTIONS





## SBC'S CARBON EMISSIONS:

Over half of our greenhouse gas emissions come from heating buildings, and a quarter come from our vehicles.



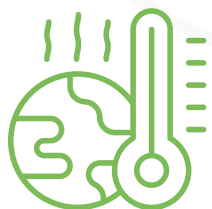
## SBC FLEET:

**23** out of **33** of our work cars are electric, which helps cut down on carbon emissions.



## BIODIVERSITY:

We take care of **44** hectares of public green spaces for nature, which is **49%** more than last year.



## GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – BORDERS WIDE:

Most greenhouse gases in the Borders come from farming (**55%**), followed by transport (**19%**) and homes (**14%**).



## RECYCLING:

Last year, we recycled almost **58%** of our household waste, while the rest of Scotland recycles about **44%**.



## EV CHARGING:

There are **92** public electric car charging points in the Borders, but that's fewer per person than the Scottish average.



# CLEAN GREEN FUTURE

**PRIORITY:** Accelerate action to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme weather



## Outcomes

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to meet or exceed our targets to deliver Net Zero by 2045
- Positive behaviour change which supports sustainable use of resources and increased community resilience
- An approach to energy in the Scottish Borders which is robust, affordable and which supports the region's response to climate change
- Protected, managed and restored environments which support the wellbeing of people and nature, as part of Scotland's first Natural Capital Innovation Zone

## Action

- Deliver the priority actions set out in the Scottish Borders Council Climate Change Plan including specifically:
- › Develop a pathway enabling a 10% reduction in the physical footprint of our estate over the next 5 years, as part of a phased approach to reducing our carbon emissions in line with Scottish Government guidance.
  - › A minimum 3% per year reduction in SBC business mileage.
  - › A reduction in SBC's fleet size, while transitioning vehicles to alternative sustainable fuel.
  - Working with the [Scottish Climate Intelligence Service](#) and [Scottish Borders Community Planning Partners](#), develop a Scottish Borders 'regional climate strategy' with a clear pathway to Net Zero by 2045.
  - Review the conclusion and outcomes of the [Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City-Region](#) climate risk and opportunity assessment with a view to assessing opportunities for future projects.
  - Prepare the Council and households for new, more efficient and climate change responsive waste and recycling requirements created by the new [Scottish Waste Charter](#), the [Waste Route-map](#), the [UK Emission Trading Scheme](#), and the [Circular Economy Bill](#).
  - Continue to develop and grow the [Greener Gateway Community Awards](#) programme which recognise and support community initiatives to further biodiversity, food growing and sustainability; while expanding the Schools Award programme with a focus on learning for sustainability.
  - Support community food growing projects across the Borders with a focus on helping groups find/use land owned by SBC, supporting lease acquisitions and funding applications as required.
  - Continue to implement the [Scottish Borders Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan \(LHEES\)](#), so that our homes and buildings no longer contribute to climate change.
  - Deliver [Energy Efficient Scotland Area-Based Schemes \(ABS\)](#) in Scottish Borders communities to improve energy efficiency, promote heat decarbonisation and address fuel poverty. At the same time, seek to leverage community benefits where possible, building on previous examples, such as the provision of a defibrillator in Eyemouth, or work experience for high school students with our ABS managing agent, [Changeworks](#).
  - Continue to increase naturalised grass management in urban areas, to support local biodiversity and make space for nature in our towns and villages.
  - As part of the [Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal](#) Natural Capital Programme, support [Tweed Forum](#) in the delivery of an Integrated Land Use and Woodland Creation Pilot, which will pioneer a more integrated approach to farming forestry and conservation, and deliver a range of benefits such as natural flood management, soil conservation, biodiversity enhancement.
  - As part of the [Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal](#) Natural Capital Programme, support [Butterfly Conservation Scotland](#) to implement an agri-environment pilot project focusing on species-rich grasslands and the conservation of the threatened Northern Brown Argus butterfly in the region, supporting the rural economy and sustainable land management by helping improve food quality, while enhancing pollination, soil management and carbon storage.

## Target date

03/2026

12/2025

06/2025

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## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:



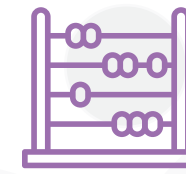
Over **1,000** young people helped create the [Youth Engagement Listen to Learn Strategy](#).

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN:



About **78%** of looked after children in the Scottish Borders are cared for in the community, which is less than the **89%** for Scotland.

## NUMERACY AND LITERACY ATTAINMENT GAPS:



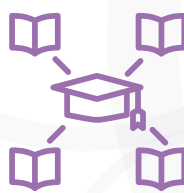
In the Borders, we have excellent school attainment, but the gap in maths skills between the primary school students from the least well off and most affluent backgrounds is **17%**, and **22.4%** for reading. While this is bigger than the average gap in Scotland, we are making progress: it is our smallest gap since 2018-19.

## SCHOOL LEAVERS:



Almost **97%** of school leavers in the Scottish Borders go on to do something positive, such as a job, training or further study.

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:



School attendance in the Scottish Borders for looked after pupils in the 2022-23 year was **82.3%**, giving rise to our target to raise this in coming years.

## MODERN APPRENTICES:



As of March 31, 2024, there were **710** Modern Apprentices in training in the Scottish Borders, with **80.8%** completing their training.

# FULLFILLING OUR POTENTIAL

**PRIORITY:** Empower schools and their communities to deliver a high-quality education focused on excellence, equity, wellbeing and improved outcomes for children, young people, and families.



## Outcomes

- Create and maintain a culture that places children's rights, protection, development and voice at the heart of decisions in which they have an interest, and ensure that the Council continues to deliver on 'the Promise' to care experienced children and young people
- Raise attainment in literacy and numeracy closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged
- Raise attainment through improved inclusion, equity and wellbeing for all children and young people
- Improve employability skills to enable sustained positive school leaver destinations
- Increase young people's participation in the planning, provision and delivery of services

## Action

- **Children's Rights**
  - > Ensure that children, young people, parents, carers and the Council workforce know about children's rights, while ensuring the voice and lived experience of children and young people inform planning and delivery of SBC services.
  - > Commission an independent advocacy service for children and young people in the Scottish Borders.
- **The Promise**
  - > Develop a project reviewing all out of area placements within Children & Families Social Work to bring young people currently in out-of-area placements back to the Borders, while eliminating the need for future out-of-area placements.
  - > Increase the proportion of care experienced school leavers attaining 5 or more award at any SCQF level based on Insight (All SCQF Awards) information.
- Deliver against the [Service Improvement](#) plan developed by the education department with a focus on improving pathways for students and deliver improvement in qualifications performance, including:
  - Transform the Senior Phase Curriculum Year 1(S4) aiming to improve attainment, curricular pathways and qualifications.
- Create a SBC leadership academy to develop opportunities to upskill teachers, headteachers and senior leaders and create pathways for aspiring leaders within the Education service.
- Continue to ensure that the best approaches to support neurodivergent learners are developed and shared, by ensuring that all staff have engaged with awareness training on neurodiversity and implement best practice.
- Implement the SBC Outdoor learning Strategy to ensure that children and young people in Borders Schools benefit from a consistent and high-quality wellbeing-focused approach to outdoor play and activity.
- Increase the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training (based on the [Annual Participation Measure](#) produced by Skills Development Scotland).
- Working with partners, develop an esports strategy focused on design, entrepreneurship, and inclusivity with a view to garnering opportunities for our region from this developing £3 Billion industry.
- Implement our multi-agency children and young people's participation and engagement strategy (the [YELL strategy](#)), ensuring that the voices of children and young people across the Borders, in particular those with [protected characteristics](#), are at the heart of our decision-making.

## Target date

- 03/2026
- 03/2026
- 12/2025
- 12/2025
- 03/2026
- 03/2026
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- 09/2025
- 03/2026
- 03/2026

# A Strong, Inclusive Economy, Transport and Infrastructure - Evidence and Context



## EMPLOYMENT:



Most jobs in the Borders are in health and social work (**19%**), retail (**12%**), and education (**9%**).

## BUSINESS LANDSCAPE:



Almost **99%** of businesses in the Borders are small or very small, and we have more start-ups per head than the Scottish average.

## CAR OWNERSHIP:



**83%** of households in the Borders own a car, showing how important cars are in rural areas.

## WAGES:



People in the Borders earn **£50** less per week than the average in Scotland.

## RAIL USAGE:



More people used trains in the Borders in 2023/24, with a **27%** increase from the previous year.

## TOURISM:



In 2023, there were **316,000** overnight visits to the Borders, bringing in **£115** million **£150m** more in 2024 than in 2023.

## PRODUCTIVITY:



In 2024, the Borders' productivity was **£49,700** per head, compared to Scotland's **£52,200**.

## ACCESS TO BROADBAND:



**90%** of homes in the Borders have superfast internet, better than **83.8%** in similar areas.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY:



**80%** of people in the Borders are working or looking for work, compared to **77.3%** in Scotland.

# STRONG INCLUSIVE ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**PRIORITY:** Deliver the key economic development programmes for our region - the [South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy](#), [Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal](#) and the [Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal](#) and [Regional Prosperity Framework](#) – making our economy stronger, greener and more sustainable.



## Outcomes

- A stronger, greener, more inclusive economy, which promotes the wellbeing of our residents and revitalises our town centres, ensuring that local businesses and social enterprises thrive
- Enhance digital and transport connectivity
- Support young people and adults who face challenging barriers to finding and maintaining employment and reaching their full potential

## Action

- Develop the [Levelling Up Partnership](#), totalling £20m, in collaboration with UK and Scottish Governments and ensuring that our region has workers for the jobs of the future to unlock the economic potential of Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick and Jedburgh, while delivering action on inequalities and improved physical connectivity across the region.
- Deliver a new Events and Tourism Strategy across 2025, informed by the South of Scotland (SoS) [Responsible Tourism Strategy](#), the [SoS Cycling Strategy](#), and Regional Events Strategy.
- As part of the [Destination Tweed](#) Programme led by Tweed Forum, deliver on the third year of the River Tweed Trail 5-year project to create a 113-mile path from Moffat to Berwick.
- As part of the [Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan](#) focus on Inward Investment, support the development of a pipeline of business sites across the South, including the development of business units in Coldstream and the Borders Innovation Park.
- Develop a culture strategy which will outline our ambitions for this key economic sector and define the Council's role in supporting it in partnership with Live Borders, SOSE and key stakeholders within the region.
- Work with [Transport Scotland](#) and South of Scotland partners to develop a collaborative approach to the specific transport needs of our region based upon high-quality data, effective integration between different modes of transport and improved connectivity through better timetabling, ticketing, and pricing alignment between nationally controlled transport systems (e.g. rail) with locally controlled transport systems (e.g. bus).
- Market and promote our bus services to improve awareness of the services provided by the Council, increasing bus patronage, income and promoting the use of public transport, and develop a transport partnership with the NHS, Borders General Hospital, Borders College, improving provision for service users, and creating a more efficient bus service for us and our partners.
- Reinforce the case for the electrification of the first phase of the Borders Railway, and advocate for extension to Hawick and Carlisle, and more frequent services on the East Coast mainline to Reston station.
- Publish and begin implementing our active travel strategy and delivery plan to encourage travel which promotes physical activity and good health by developing active travel infrastructure (including bike parking and secure storage) and improves linkages with public transport.
- With respect to electric vehicles, participate in the regional procurement of a Charge Place Operator in 2025/26 to gain economies of scale and aggregate the demand across the region to attract the best solution for the Scottish Borders and regional partners. The Charge Place Operator will then deliver the aspirations of the Scottish Borders EV Public Charging Expansion Plan from 2026/27 onwards.
- Work with the UK Government's Project Gigabit to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to hard to reach homes and businesses across the Scottish Borders.
- Improve access to employability services across the region by mapping and analysing the existing offer across third sector organisations, and implement targeted promotion strategies, ensuring more individuals are aware of and able to benefit from these opportunities.
- Design and deliver local employability services using a [5 Stage Employability Pipeline Approach](#), ensuring that support is provided to individuals across their employment journey, with a focus on supporting young people, vulnerable people and families, and supporting people into sustainable positive destinations.

## Target date

03/2026

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# Empowered Vibrant Communities – Evidence and Context



## GEOGRAPHY:



The Scottish Borders is the 6th largest council area in Scotland and the 4th most sparsely populated in mainland Scotland. Only 9 towns have more than **2,500** people.



## NEIGHBOURHOOD SATISFACTION:

**97%** of people think their neighbourhood is a good place to live.



## HOMELESSNESS:

The number of homeless people in the Borders has gone up by **8%** since 2013.

## CHILD POVERTY:



**24%** of children in the Scottish Borders live in poverty, which is more than the **21.8%** for all of Scotland.



## ACCESS TO SERVICES:

**25%** of the Borders are among the hardest places to get services in Scotland.



## COMMUNITY COUNCILS:

There are **69** community councils in the Scottish Borders.

## CRIME RATES:



There were **425** crimes per 10,000 people in 2021/22 in the Scottish Borders, which is much lower than Scotland's **524**.



## EMPLOYMENT:

**28%** of adults did formal volunteering in the last year, more than the **18%** for Scotland.

# EMPOWERED VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

**PRIORITY:** Support communities and empower people to achieve strong, active, resilient and sustainable communities and to realise opportunities for improving people's lives.



## Outcomes

- Community-led place plans across rural communities and towns to enable communities to take control of their own destinies and assets
- Enhanced participation and engagement which empowers communities to shape the decisions which affect them
- Modern, sustainable and simplified services that meet the needs of communities and customers
- Sustainable use of land and buildings
- Reduce the number of children in poverty; and reduce the impact of living in poverty on families

## Action

- Support communities in the [Borderlands](#) target towns of Eyemouth, Galashiels, Hawick and Jedburgh to deliver their place plans.
- Support communities in the Borders to develop their place plans, creating effective links within localities to deliver against the plans' ambitions effectively.
- As part of the Community Planning Partnership, develop locality plans for each of Bannerfield, Langlee and Burnfoot, based upon significant engagement with communities to ensure that plans respond to local needs and inform future delivery.
- As part of the Levelling Up programme, provide funding totalling £0.625m to the Youth Local Action Group to help identify and deliver youth facilities across the region.
- Develop a 3-year [Community Learning and Development](#) plan supported by engagement with local communities, enabling us to better respond to local need.
- Review the Anti-social behaviour strategy in partnership with Police Scotland, enabling us to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour across the region, and use mobile camera devices as a tactical solutions to responding to provide an agile response to deter and detect perpetrators.
- As part of the Live Borders review, support local communities to take ownership of community centres across the region, enabling local communities to better control those vital local assets.
- The Council will establish an Elected Member/Officer Working Group to review and develop recommendations relating to parking within Borders towns, beginning with off-street parking.
- In response to our declaration of a housing emergency in 2024, implement our Housing Emergency Action Plan in collaboration with local partners, with a focus on increasing supply (e.g. for key worker housing), and improving housing access through increased awareness of housing options and increased partnership with the Borders Strategic Housing Forum, to better prevent homelessness.
- With partners, deliver the [Regional Economic Partnership Housing Action Plan](#), aiming to increase the provision of homes of all types and tenures by focusing on market-based housing and developers across the Borders.
- Following public engagement develop our 'Good Food Nation Plan' in collaboration with NHS, local food producers, [South of Scotland Destination Alliance](#) and [Borders Community Action](#), ensuring that everyone in the Borders has a safe and reliable access to healthy and sustainable food, while promoting our local food producers.
- Develop a whole systems approach to poverty reduction and prevention through engagement with Housing, Employability, Transport and Childcare services.
- Develop a shared data resource across services and partners so that there is an in-depth understanding of the drivers and impact of poverty.

## Target date

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# Good Health and Wellbeing - Evidence and Context



## AGEING POPULATION:



**26%** of people in the Borders are **65** or older, and over half are over **50**. For every **1,000** working-age people, there are **700** who aren't working. This is higher than the average for Scotland and is expected to grow.



## FUTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS:

From 2024 to 2027, the Borders will need **800** more people in health and social work. From 2027 to 2034, this will grow to **1,900** people.



## QUALITY OF CARE SERVICES:

**81%** of adult care services in the Borders are rated good or better.

## CARE WAITING LISTS:



We've made significant progress in cutting care waiting lists by **80%** in **18** months, from **650** people to just over **100**.



## CARE AT HOME:

Over three-quarters of people getting care at home in the Borders say it has made their lives better.



## SPORTS:

Attendance at sports facilities went up by **46%** between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

## MENTAL HEALTH:



While **21** of people in Scotland have serious mental health issues, **15%** do so in the Borders.



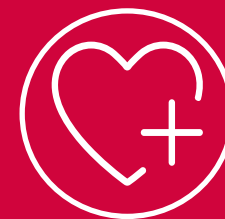
## LIFE EXPECTANCY:

In the Borders, women live to **82.1** years on average, and men live to **78.6** years, 'better than Scotland's averages of **80.7** for women and **76.5** for men. At the same time, improvements in life expectancy nationally have stalled.



# GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**PRIORITY:** Ensure the people of the Scottish Borders have the opportunities and are supported to take control of their health and wellbeing, enjoying a high quality of life.



## Outcomes

- People of the Scottish Borders are supported and enabled to take control of their health and wellbeing to enjoy a high quality of life – This includes ensuring support for unpaid carers
- Services are designed around service users' needs and focus on prevention, early intervention and minimising health inequalities
- The right services are commissioned and developed with partners and will meet the outcomes of any future National Care Service

## Action

- Develop a community reablement service within the care at home service, ensuring that service users have access to reablement support to reduce their care needs and improve their independence.
- Develop a Physical Activity and Sports Strategy leading to an increase in opportunities for physical activity and sport, increase in active travel, increase in awareness of the importance of physical activity, and improved joined up working across the physical activity/sport landscape.
- Increase the use of Technology Enabled Care to better support care at home.
- Working in partnership with Health and Social Care partners, improve our understanding of specialist housing needs now and in the future, ensuring that we deliver homes that meet people's needs.
- Working in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council, [Scottish Futures Trust](#), [SOSE](#) and [South of Scotland Community Housing](#), undertake research into the demand for key worker housing in the South of Scotland, reviewing relevant policies and then gathering evidence on need and demand through engaging with workers and employers as well as undertaking workshops with stakeholders in the regional housing sector.
- Update and implement our Local Access and Transport Strategy, delivering a joined-up strategic approach to transport within the region, encouraging and facilitating healthier more sustainable transport choices including use of public transport services.
- Develop training with Borders College to make better use of the facilities and opportunities offered by this partnership to enhance our own staff development.
- Develop a single view of Health & Social Care data across the Partnership, through the Health Share Project, limiting the need to request the same info multiple times from patients/service users.
- Introduce new ways of working for Social Work Services through digital transformation and process re-engineering to make best use of resource improving efficiencies and outcomes.
- Ensure all staff have the relevant dementia training opportunities and the right skills and knowledge to provide high quality support to those living with dementia.
- Develop and implement the Creating Hope Together strategy, focused on suicide prevention.
- Develop succession planning and career pathways across Health and Social Care to ensure effective people planning and provide staff development opportunities.
- Build on and develop key relationships with NHS Borders and other partners to ensure that public health and the work of the Wellbeing Board are embedded within the Council's policy and project delivery and in its partnership work with others, as well as in its focus on empowering individuals to take control of their health.

## Target date

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# Working Together, Improving Lives - Evidence and Context



## BUDGET SAVINGS:



SBC saved **£37** million through our fit for 2024 programme, which is **£7** million more than we planned.

## INVESTMENT & TRANSFORMATION:



SBC has established a replenishing **£20** Million investment fund to drive innovation & transformation.

## OUR BUDGET:



We have a yearly budget of **£370** million but will face an **£18.1** million gap by 2028/29, if we don't deliver required savings every year.

## BETTER CARE SERVICES:



Working with partners, SBC has made care services **16%** more efficient, saving hundreds of hours every week.

## TALENTED LOCAL WORKFORCE:



SBC invests in 'grow your own', 'modern apprenticeship' & 'graduate apprenticeship' programmes, including for teachers, HGV drivers and social workers.

## FAIR WORK:



Scottish Borders Council has been a fair work employer since **2019**, providing fair pay and conditions, and ensuring workers are heard and represented, treated with respect and have opportunities to progress.

## KEY WORKERS:



SBC has developed innovative ways to attract key workers, including housing, training, digital tools and a staff benefits scheme.

## COUNCIL TAX:



Together, Scottish Government funding and rates make up around **80%** of what the Council spends annually, with Council Tax providing the remaining **20%**.

# WORKING TOGETHER, IMPROVING LIVES

**PRIORITY:** Ensure that Scottish Borders Council is effective, sustainable, responsive and aligned to the needs and priorities of our communities.



## Outcomes

- Services are designed to meet people's needs
- Best value is achieved across all services
- SBC is an employer of choice
- Digital technology is maximised to make service delivery better
- Better outcomes are delivered through effective partnership working

## Actions

- Fully implement and raise awareness of the Council's Community Engagement Strategy, with a view to improving how the Council interacts with citizens and communities, emphasising transparency and partnership; and develop, consult upon and implement a Customer Strategy to improve the ways in which customers engage with the Council and access services, in response to customer needs.
- Implement In-cab technology for Waste Collection Vehicles that allows real-time sharing of information with crews across the area to minimise missed collections; and to maximise data-driven responsiveness and customer satisfaction.
- Roll out more issue-reporting capabilities for all SBC customers the includes visibility of real-time updates on a map on progress such as those already available for potholes. This will include: streetlights, festive lighting, illuminated signs, traffic signals, trees, grass, dog fouling, and fly-tipping.
- Develop an approach to commissioning which strengthens governance, decision-making and strategic oversight, while reviewing key areas of commissioning activity to ensure that Borders communities have access to the services they need.
- Deliver the recommendations of the Accounts Commission's November 2024 'Best Value – Scottish Borders Council' report, including more public reporting of Transformation & Performance, with a view to securing a council that is as effective, efficient, sustainable and responsive as possible.
- Ensure that the public reports on the Transformation Programme are in line with the Council Plan and Financial Plans to show clear connections between them and prove that our financial strategy is sustainable.
- Develop a 'Digital Commercialisation' Strategy for SBC, to make the most of Council assets and maximise returns on investment to support the delivery of Council services.
- Roll-out Career Pathways across all SBC services in line with future service demands, so that new recruits and existing staff can identify clear structured progression opportunities, expectations and future plans.
- Reinforce the various 'grow your own' and modern/graduate apprenticeships across SBC, which will help sustain a talented workforce across various professions, whilst showing a clear investment commitment to existing staff and local recruitment.
- Develop and implement an AI Strategy for SBC that ensures the safe, efficient, and ambitious use of relevant AI tools. This strategy will seek to ensure SBC remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of our community by embracing cutting-edge AI technologies while maintaining the highest standards of data security.
- Develop and implement comprehensive service and digital transformation for Council services, in both Protective Services and Children and Families Social Work.
- Working with local Health & Social Care partners, undertake a comprehensive review of Care at Home provision across the Scottish Borders that ensures high quality services and models providing best value.
- Work with strategic partners to achieve better outcomes for refugees as they resettle in the Scottish Borders, underpinned by the Scottish Government New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

## Target date

09/2025

03/2026

03/2026

09/2026

06/2025

12/2025

03/2026

03/2026

03/2026

09/2025

03/2026

03/2026

03/2026



# LOCALITIES ACTIONS



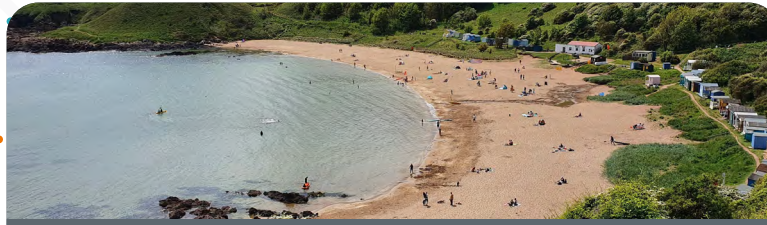
Support local communities in developing a town pilot approach to Rationalisation for Duns, focused on delivering services with an efficient use of the Council's real estate.

Following the successful Pingo pilot project, which led to the creation of two new bus routes (Duns-Coldstream and Duns-Berwick), implement a revised taxi-bus scheme, making best use of learnings from the pilot.

Design and build new business units at Gunsgreenhill Industrial Estate, Eyemouth.

Provide new facilities for primary education in Eyemouth, ensuring engagement with the community in the development plans, following our options appraisal.

Support the development of a masterplan for the Eyemouth Harbour area, led by Eyemouth Harbour Trust including technical surveys, ground investigations, environmental studies and other associated works.



## BERWICKSHIRE:

This page presents priority work for Berwickshire for the coming year. Many of the projects are led by others working in our communities and we will take an enabling approach to provide advice and practical support to delivery.

Invest £800,000 from the Council's Second Homes Council Tax Affordable Housing Investment Budget to grant assist Eildon Housing Association's plans to build 10 affordable homes in Westruther.

Funded by the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, develop complete and promote the use of business units at Coldstream industrial estate, as creating additional business space to support the local economy.

Develop a proposal for Extra Care Housing in the Eyemouth area in conjunction with our strategic housing providers.

Deliver a new Play Park in Eyemouth, engaging with the community on their aspirations.

Develop our coastal change adaptation plan in Berwickshire, in line with new government guidance, allowing SBC to better understand future areas for flooding action, including a study focused on the Walls in Burmouth and the Eyemouth sediment model, looking at ways to keep the sand on the beach to reduce wave over-topping

Support the Eyemouth Town Team in developing, submitting and implementing a Town Plan and associated Investment Plan as part of the Borderlands Place Programme, and support local communities in developing a place plan for each of Coldstream, Bonkyl and Preston, Duns and District, Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham, Foulden, Mordington and Lamberton, and Abbey St Bathans.

Develop designs for an early years and family hub in Eyemouth to help support local families.

Deliver an area-based energy efficient scheme in Coldstream targeting 150 hard to heat properties to improve their energy efficiency, with an estimated £92,000 investment.

In partnership with our strategic housing providers, develop a model for Amenity Housing within the Kelso Extra Care Housing programme.

Progress the restoration and upgrade of the high-profile Bakery Building in Jedburgh Town Centre and continue with the associated feasibility work around the High Street, including improved pedestrian facilities and public realm.

Continue to work with young people in Jedburgh on developing and delivering the Neighbourhood Plan for Jedburgh, as part of a 'A Place in Childhood', through the creation of a Jedburgh Youth Forum.

Undertake a detailed assessment of the flooding within Jedburgh, allowing us to develop designs and options to reduce the impact of floods on the local community.

Support Kelso Skate Park group to progress enhancement projects of the skate park and surrounding area.

Develop the Jedburgh corner building as part of the improvement of Jedburgh's historic town centre.

Subject to provision of levelling up funding, progress work to ensure the structural integrity of 3-5 Exchange Street.

Support the Pollinators along the Tweed Project in communities along the Tweed Corridor.



## CHEVIOT

This page presents priority work for Cheviot for the coming year. Many of the projects are led by others working in our communities and we will take an enabling approach to provide advice and practical support to delivery.

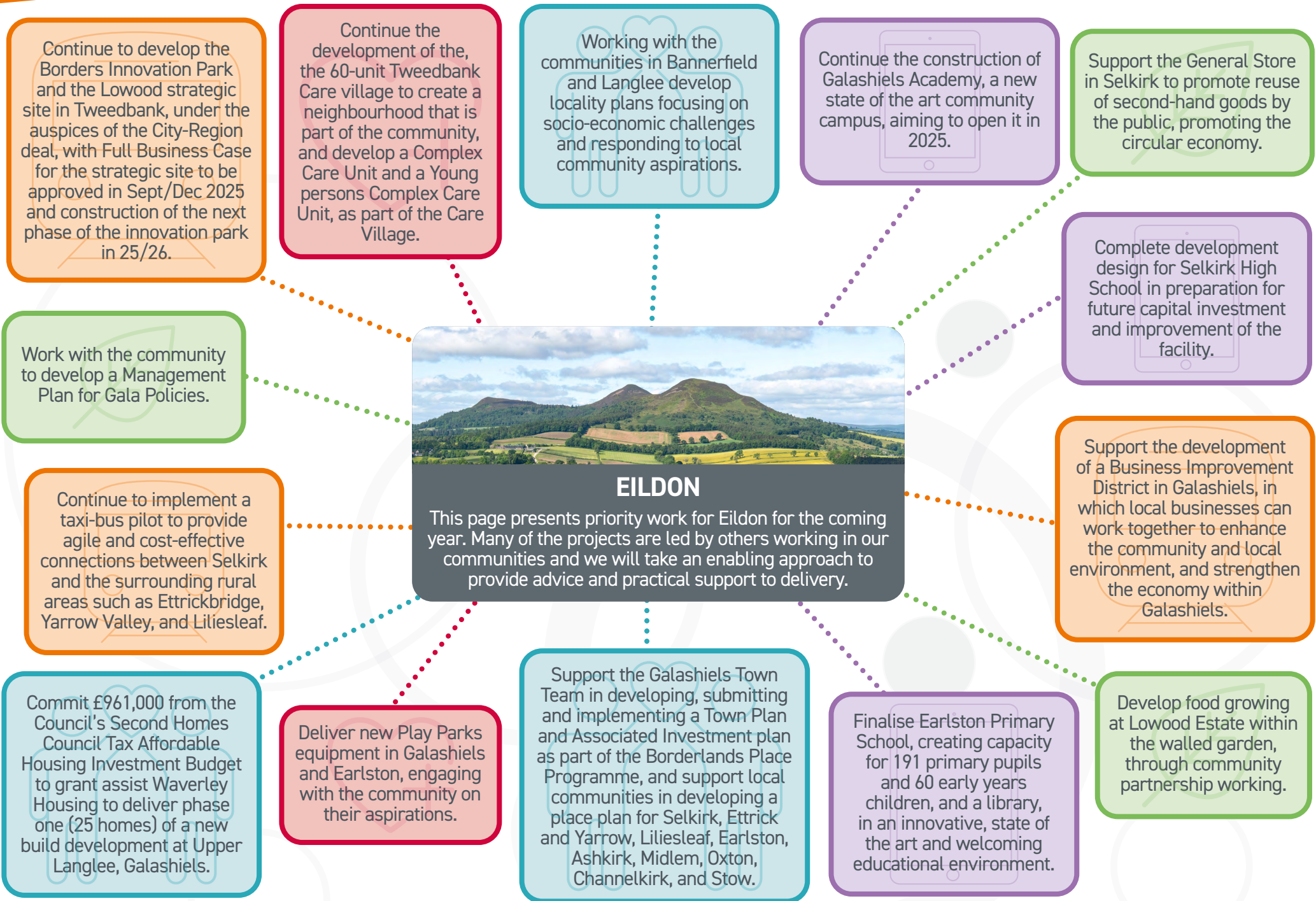
Increase service delivery and resource allocation at cluster level, for Kelso and Jedburgh school clusters, to ensure that decision-making sits at the heart of the community.

Support the Jedburgh Town Team in developing, submitting and implementing a Town Plan and associated Investment Plan as part of the Borderlands Place Programme.

Continue to implement a taxi-bus pilot to provide agile and cost-effective connections between Jedburgh and the surrounding rural areas such as Oxnam, Denholm, Ancrum.

Support local communities to develop a place plan for Smailholm, and Crailing, Eckford and Nisbet which will be registered in the [Local Development Plan](#), in line with national recommendations, ensuring that the community's views are reflected in the decision-making.

Finalise the demolition of Jed Grammar, and market it in the interest of the town.



Continue to develop the Borders Innovation Park and the Lowood strategic site in Tweedbank, under the auspices of the City-Region deal, with Full Business Case for the strategic site to be approved in Sept/Dec 2025 and construction of the next phase of the innovation park in 25/26.

Continue the development of the, the 60-unit Tweedbank Care village to create a neighbourhood that is part of the community, and develop a Complex Care Unit and a Young persons Complex Care Unit, as part of the Care Village.

Working with the communities in Bannerfield and Langlee develop locality plans focusing on socio-economic challenges and responding to local community aspirations.

Continue the construction of Galashiels Academy, a new state of the art community campus, aiming to open it in 2025.

Support the General Store in Selkirk to promote reuse of second-hand goods by the public, promoting the circular economy.

Work with the community to develop a Management Plan for Gala Policies.

**EILDON**

This page presents priority work for Eildon for the coming year. Many of the projects are led by others working in our communities and we will take an enabling approach to provide advice and practical support to delivery.

Complete development design for Selkirk High School in preparation for future capital investment and improvement of the facility.

Continue to implement a taxi-bus pilot to provide agile and cost-effective connections between Selkirk and the surrounding rural areas such as Ettrickbridge, Yarrow Valley, and Liliesleaf.

Support the development of a Business Improvement District in Galashiels, in which local businesses can work together to enhance the community and local environment, and strengthen the economy within Galashiels.

Commit £961,000 from the Council's Second Homes Council Tax Affordable Housing Investment Budget to grant assist Waverley Housing to deliver phase one (25 homes) of a new build development at Upper Langlee, Galashiels.

Deliver new Play Parks equipment in Galashiels and Earlston, engaging with the community on their aspirations.

Support the Galashiels Town Team in developing, submitting and implementing a Town Plan and Associated Investment plan as part of the Borderlands Place Programme, and support local communities in developing a place plan for Selkirk, Ettrick and Yarrow, Liliesleaf, Earlston, Ashkirk, Midlem, Oxtan, Channelkirk, and Stow.

Finalise Earlston Primary School, creating capacity for 191 primary pupils and 60 early years children, and a library, in an innovative, state of the art and welcoming educational environment.

Develop food growing at Lowood Estate within the walled garden, through community partnership working.

Finalise the Hawick Flood Prevention scheme.

Establish Walking Aid MOT Stations in Hawick with the aim of supporting people who have walking or balance issues, thereby improving their mobility and resilience.

Support local communities to develop a place plan for each of Denholm and District, Upper Liddesdale and Hermitage, Hobkirk and Southdean and Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water, to be registered in the LDP in line with national recommendations, ensuring that local communities' views are reflected in decision-making.

Support the Hawick Town Team in developing, submitting and implementing a Town Plan and Associated Investment plan as part of the Borderlands Place Programme.

Working with the community in Burnfoot, develop locality plans focusing on socio-economic challenges and responding to local community aspirations.

Develop a full business case for the Hawick Care Village, supporting lifestyles and personal preferences for living, care and wellbeing.

Complete town/streetscape enhancements in front of the restored Glenmac Mill.

## TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE

This page presents priority work for Teviot and Liddesdale for the coming year. Many of the projects are led by others working in our communities and we will take an enabling approach to provide advice and practical support to delivery.

Continue the development of Hawick High School to deliver an open and welcoming facility that provides high quality education environments and experiences, encouraging collaboration and inclusion, with the aim of opening the school in 2028.

Invest £785,000 from the Council's Second Homes Council Tax Affordable Housing Investment Budget to grant assist Scottish Borders Housing Association to develop 16 new homes on a complex brownfield site in Burnfoot, Hawick

Continue to invest over £180k in our fixed-bus network towards Newcastleton and explore potential for Demand Responsive Transport, and explore the possibility of partnership with Dumfries and Galloway to improve cross-boundary transport provision.

Deliver training through a professional textile tutor for 5th and 6th year students in traditional heritage craft skills, supporting achievement of qualifications at SQA Higher level and a final community exhibition of items produced at the Borders Tower House Museum.

Deliver new Play Parks in Denholm and Hobkirk/Bonchester Bridge, engaging with the community on their aspirations.

Buckleuch Mill – facilitate future redevelopment and ensure safety, following demolition of the building.



Support the Peebles Town Team in developing, submitting and implementing a Town Plan and associated Investment Plan focusing on strengthening the local economy, encouraging young people to live and remain in the town and reducing congestion within the town.

Support local communities to develop a place plan for each of Skirling, Tweedsmuir, Innerleithen, Walkerburn, and West Linton, which will be registered in the [Local Development Plan](#), in line with national recommendations, ensuring that the community's views are reflected in the decision-making.

Continue to work with Peebles Community Trust to promote reuse of second-hand goods by the public, promoting the circular economy.

Progress the Pollinators Along the Tweed project in the Tweeddale area (Peebles, Innerleithen, Walkerburn, Clovenfords and Broughton) enhancing biodiversity and local amenity as part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

Support renewal of the Business Improvement District in Peebles, previously led by Go Tweed Valley.

Support SOSE in the delivery of the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre and Bike Park.



## TWEEDDALE

This page presents priority work for Tweeddale for the coming year. Many of the projects are led by others working in our communities and we will take an enabling approach to provide advice and practical support to delivery.

Continue to support Youth hubs and drop-in sessions at Peebles High School, and with partners, providing direct support for Younger Peebles.

Deliver a new Play Park in Broughton following engagement with the local community.

Continue construction of Peebles High School, a sustainable, modern new facility, providing opportunities for all learners to develop their personal potential and aspirations, as well as equipping pupils for later life and active citizenship, aiming to open it in 2025.

Support the community food growing project and orchard in Walkerburn.

Develop the Chambers Institution building on Peebles high street to provide improved accessibility to the museum, gallery, children's library and visitor info/contact centre.

Continue to support the 5G Innovation project, enabling the deployment of monitoring equipment to better understand flood risks linked to the Tweed as part of a joint project with the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Support the local community to develop a bunkhouse to complement the existing café project at the historic Crook Inn Bunkhouse site in Tweedsmuir, linked to the River Tweed Trail.