

Additional Comments on the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill following workshops in Dumfries and Galashiels.

Background

On the 14 and 23 January 2019 the Committee held two informal workshops in Dumfries and Galashiels to hear local people's views on the South of Scotland Enterprise (Scotland) Bill. Over 120 people from a range of community groups, local authorities and business interests were present. Both evenings started with an introduction and brief discussion from members of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee before discussion was opened to the floor.

Due to the successful attendance over both nights the Committee were aware not all attendees may have had the opportunity to comment on Bill within the workshop timescales. The Committee therefore extended the opportunity to make further comments on the Bill until the end of both respective weeks. The following is a compilation of additional comments that were sent through by attendees to the Committee after the workshops:

FOLLOWING THE WORKSHOP IN DUMFRIES ON 14 JANUARY 2019

Dr Mary-Ann Smyth

I was going to ask the Committee to ensure that "environment" and "sustainability" are targets for SOSEP. These are the key drivers for importing and retaining talent and energy, and help our region thrive.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

We would support the new Agency taking a **place-based approach** – as opposed to a narrow, sectoral approach focused on agriculture – to the future development of the South of Scotland region. Such an approach can be tailored appropriately to the opportunities of the South of Scotland area and its localities, can be based on the area's assets - thereby creating a positive dialogue about what the region has to offer rather than a negative dialogue based on its challenges/needs -, should be shaped by and involve local people, and can take a holistic approach to support businesses (including in the primary sector), but also thinking about inter-related issues, including transport and digital connectivity, housing, supporting small towns, community resilience, health, etc. in an integrated way. More discussion of [future principles for rural policy in Scotland](#) and [the place-based approach and what it means for rural areas](#) can be found in working papers produced for a project on place-based policy which forms part of the Scottish government's Strategic Research Programme 2016-21.

Recognition of the **dominance of micro/small businesses (including many sole traders) in the South of Scotland** is critical to the work of the new Agency. This means

that support needs are different and that support needs to be provided in different ways. Evidence shows that rural businesses tend to be less likely to seek public sector support/advice than urban businesses (they are less aware of what is available, this support tends to be tailored to larger businesses, distance to access, etc.) but those that do access such support often have a bad experience, for example, not being signposted to the most appropriate organisation if the one they initially approach is not it (which puts them off doing so again in future). Recent evidence has also suggested that, when they do approach the public sector, they tend to access a wider range of organisations (including Forestry Commission, local authorities, Food Standards Scotland, etc.) so there needs to be better integration in the support provision – the new Agency could play a key role in coordinating these different actors to ensure that the assistance received is appropriately planned, resourced and coordinated so that businesses have a coherent ‘public sector experience’ (particularly as many of them will only access support when they are in a time of crisis). More information is available on rural businesses and their access to public sector support (based on research done with businesses in the South of Scotland region in 2016-7) in an RPC briefing available online: [Growth sector businesses in rural South of Scotland: Enterprise support experiences, needs and local connections](#)

There has been some discussion of whether the Agency should have a designated HQ, and if so, where that HQ should be. Not paying for a large HQ building in one place would certainly save money, and, while the Agency will have to ensure that its staff and activities remain coordinated, **having staff distributed across the region** (perhaps based in buildings with relevant partner organisations) would help in terms of ensuring stronger and more regular (formal and informal) links with partner organisations and with individuals and communities across the region. It is critical that the Agency works with all the full range of local/regional stakeholders, including community groups, trade/business associations, representative organisations and colleges/universities. Close working with the latter will ensure that young people are retained/attracted back to the region and are appropriately skilled to meet the region’s current and future labour market requirements.

The Agency having a similar remit to HIE (in terms of community development as well as economic development) would be beneficial, not least in recognition of the rural nature of the South of Scotland region and the strong intertwining of businesses and communities. This will require **different monitoring approaches and evaluation criteria** to those operated by Scottish Enterprise. For example, measuring economic criteria such as the number of jobs created or increased turnover will likely not capture the range of impacts of the Agency’s work, which may include, for example, enhancing the sustainability and resilience of the region’s communities, encouraging population and service retention, etc. Appropriate social and community indicators will be required to adequately measure such impacts and ongoing research and evaluation of these impacts will be important.

The Agency needs to ensure that will **engage with all** organisations, businesses, communities and individuals, not just those that shout the loudest. The most deprived – which are likely to be those without a voice, capacity, skills, etc. - may be the most in need of support but unable to articulate this. Again different approaches may be needed both to identify them for support (i.e. not a competitive process) and then to deliver that support.

Finally, it is perhaps just worth re-stating that **the region is not homogenous** and there are considerable differences across the region’s communities in terms of challenges, opportunities, assets, etc. Different development approaches may need to be used in

different places to recognise these differences – using a place-based approach, as outlined in the first bullet point above. It is also worth highlighting recent work that has been done by SRUC on different issues and areas of the South of Scotland region, including: (1) a seminar in June 2018 on [Future Land Use in the South of Scotland](#); (2) creating a Vulnerability Index of settlements across Scotland in 2012, which highlighted particular vulnerabilities in the South West of Scotland (see Section 2 in [Rural Scotland in Focus 2012](#)); (3) SRUC's [Rural Business Survey 2017](#) from which reports are available online here; the survey includes businesses across the South of Scotland; the 2018 survey work has just been completed and analysis of the data will start shortly; and (4) work by Steven Thomson on the future of agriculture in the South of Scotland for the South of Scotland Alliance.

Lorna Young

Location of HQ

While I agree that operationally the location of an administrative HQ matters little, the perception by local people of the place selected matters a great deal. There needs to be a clear rationale behind why the selected location was chosen, and that rationale should demonstrate an understanding of sensitivities of remote rural communities regarding geographic inclusiveness.

A rationale that has worked well in D&G in the past is the geographic centre of the region, which in D&G is generally understood to be Castle Douglas. If the HQ were located at the geographic centre of the south of Scotland, or to the town closest to that point, then in my experience this rationale would be an acceptable and easily understood explanation for location selection.

Young People

As the parent of a teenager it is concerning to hear commentary regarding 'keeping our young people in the region'. Care needs to be taken with language used, as we do not want the enterprise agency to be perceived to be limiting the future aspirations and adventures of our young people.

What the agency can do is encourage and enable the creation of opportunities for our young people. For those who wish to remain here we need accessible training, skills development and meaningful career opportunities. For those who move away there should be good employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to enable them to return at a later stage in life if they wish.

Importantly, there should also be an appreciation of the tremendous opportunity the south of Scotland presents for young people relocating here from elsewhere, particularly as improving connectivity connects us more reliably to global market opportunities. Some of the most passionate new tourism and food businesses I have met recently are young families relocating from England to establish businesses here due to high quality of life and low cost of business start-up. For young entrepreneurs, in particular the wellbeing focussed millennial generation, the low cost / high quality proposition presents a mechanism for the south to address demographic challenge.

Meeting Expectations

The committee appeared concerned that the new agency may not deliver on the perceived high expectations of it. The reason for the expectations can only be fully understood by appreciating the current deficit of resource and of meaningful advocacy for the south. It is generally well understood within the south that the agency will take time to bed in and to reach its potential. However its very existence will have a transformative impact on how the south perceives itself to be resourced and represented almost immediately. Key to delivering on that expectation will be effective local and external communication.

What is Strong?

The real jewel we have in the south is mature, complex networks at a grassroots level. To give an example, we had a rural economy researcher from the RSA visiting D&G last summer as part of the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and his key take on the region was how incredibly networked it is, he commented to me, 'How does everyone know each other right across such a huge region? How has this happened, I've never seen anything like this.'

We perhaps take for granted what an extraordinary foundation this is for sustainable place-based economic development. These networks are not obvious, and they are perhaps barely visible unless you are part of them, but they are the key to sustainable development here. Knowledge of what works well in the south largely exists, currently, outside of existing public agencies and within these networks, which are sectoral as well as geographic. That should be acknowledged in the way the agency operates, through collaboration with these grassroots networks.

The new agency will work best if it recognises, respects and works in partnership with the complex geographic and sectoral communities that have developed across the south; intertwining with them, enabling, resourcing and empowering them. That is what is meant by the new agency must be everywhere.

Networked rural development is about getting the balance right between a bottom up enabling approach and top down leadership. The big opportunity for the new agency is to get that balance correct for the south to enable the latent potential here to flourish.

What that means for the Bill? The enabling function of the Bill is essential in order to give the agency the flexibility to identify the needs and emerging opportunities of the South. There is a risk, if prescriptive elements are added to the Bill, that the flexibility, responsiveness and creativity of the new agency to innovate and to co-evolve alongside the rural economy of the south could be compromised.

Rural economies around the world are going through a period of sustained rapid change. That change creates opportunity as well as challenge. It's therefore essential that the new agency is enabled to meet the emerging and future needs and opportunities of the south, as well as those current needs already identified. In my opinion that necessitates a light touch in the legislation.

Pip Tabor, The Southern Uplands Partnership

1. The SUP has been calling for the HIE model since its establishment in 2000 so we are delighted that this bill has been drafted. Over the years we have

watched with envy as communities in the North have been supported and helped to develop a range of community initiatives, based on their local natural and cultural assets. Community-owned land, community-run businesses and energy schemes managed by communities are all relatively common in the north but scarce in the South. We now look forward to seeing efforts by new Agency to enable us to catch-up!

2. We were delighted to work with Rob Dickson and Professor Griggs as they toured the South of Scotland to meet with communities and businesses to get the view from grass-roots. A lot of issues were aired – and clearly one agency is not going to be able to address all of them straight away, but some messages were quite consistent. The high importance of the natural and cultural heritage of the South was mentioned over and over again, and while the new Agency is clearly aware of this, it is important that care is taken to ensure that “capitalising” on these assets is done in ways that are sustainable. We note that the draft bill avoids any use of the “sustainable” word, and we have suggested that this is an oversight that could easily be corrected.

We also believe that there is an opportunity in the South to drive forward on other Scottish Government commitments, eg to increase renewable energy generation, decarbonise the economy and to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We are disappointed that the bill currently lacks references to some of these wider ambitions, especially as they could all under-pin a range of innovative enterprises.

3. Communities in the North have had support from HIE for many years and, at least partly as a result of this, they now have capacity to take advantage of a range of funding schemes. Capacity in the South is not as advanced. While some of our communities are well able to develop and deliver initiatives, others are going to need more support. We suggest that the new Agency needs to be aware of this and be ready to be pro-active in helping some communities. In our experience community capacity takes time to develop and a major weakness in recent years has been that many such efforts have been through short-term grant-funded schemes. Taking a longer-term, on-going approach to such support is likely to be much more successful. We are concerned that “Support for existing community organisations” may not be enough to fully unlock the potential that we have, and would suggest the focus should be on “growing” existing community organisations and nurturing new ones.
4. Our definition of the South is not the same as that used in the Bill. We see rural communities facing the same problems whether they be in D&G, the Borders, Ayrshire or South Lanarkshire. For example, the UNESCO Biosphere which we have been closely involved with for the last 10 years, bridges D&G, S and E Ayrshire. There was talk during the consultation meetings of the boundary being “flexible” but it seems this may now be less likely. It would be better in our view if the Agency could cover a broader area (and indeed one could make the case for a Scotland-wide Rural Enterprise Agency that works along the lines of HIE).

5. Headquarters. It is clear that the new Agency needs to have a presence across the region and there was strong support for this “decentralisation” in the consultation meetings. Out-posting Agency staff, would seem to be the way to go, although we also need to make maximum use of the superfast broadband network as it develops so that as many people as possible have easy access to support. SUP would be delighted to discuss making use of its office facilities across the Region
6. The land-use sector is obviously of significant relevance to South Scotland. Farming and Forestry are vital sectors along with tourism, recreation, healthy living and conservation. The high-quality environment sustains a lot of business activity and adds greatly to quality of life. Land-uses will need to adapt to changing economic and physical climates. Diversification will be needed and there will be a major role for the Agency to both assist this process and seek to maximise the benefits (and minimise negative impacts) for the local economy of the region.

Related to this is the Scottish Governments’ work on the Land Use Strategy. The Borders pilot developed a tool that we believe could help guide future land-use decisions and help to target future public support to where benefits to society are greatest. We would like to see this mechanism developed further and used by the new Agency to help shape its’ work.

7. Aims The draft Bill sets out aims in section 5. Some detail is given to the first principle aim – but the second (improve the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland) is rather vague. We have suggested this could be made a little clearer if it too had additional detail and we have suggested wording that might be suitable:

- *Support efforts to improve recreational provision that attracts visitors to the South of Scotland*
- *Support initiatives that sustain and enhance Biodiversity and landscapes as a contribution to making the South Scotland an attractive place to invest.*

8. In our view Board membership needs to fully reflect the breadth of both the geography of the Agency and all its’ aims. Importantly from our perspective this should include representation from a range of South of Scotland community interests, small businesses and from the environmental sector. There is also a vital role for young people to influence priorities. We would suggest that rather than all Board members being appointed by Holyrood that there is a split enabling a proportion to be locally appointed representatives. We would also like to see an on-going role for “theme groups” providing ideas, comment and advice to the Board.

Karen Morley

I would have liked to respond at the meeting to Stewart Stevenson. He said after comments from Solway Firth partnership about lack of environmental references in the bill that 'the environment is covered in the second aim of the bill' I would like to point out that although this is correct there is no expansion of this aim as there is with the first aim. As it is highly likely that those setting the focus, remit and emphasis of the new agency may not be totally familiar with the complexity of environmental issues which underpin our economy I think it is reasonable to ask that some steer is given to the board on the importance of environmental issues in achieving a sustainable economy. Similarly, it would be hoped that someone with knowledge of this area is represented on the board. I would also ask that the bill is changed to allow for local consultation on the makeup and appointments to the board.

On a general point I would reiterate the need to reference sustainable economic development and growth within the bill to ensure a sustainable ethos is fostered within the new agency.

Barbara Elborn, Newcastleton & District Community Council and the Community Trust

COMMUNITIES – THE VIEW OF NEWCASTLETON

Before you decide on the solution you need to know the challenges our community faces living and working in a remote rural location; we have very different needs to those living in more urban environments:

1. ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL – we appreciate that there must be rules, but there must also be flexibility and discretion.

As a community we rely on the huge dedication of individuals who go the extra mile to make our lives better. Over 1/3rd of the adult population living in Newcastleton are already doing their bit to keep our services and amenities running. Newcastleton has a volunteer network of 200 people, incredulous as that may sound when our population is circa 800. Without our volunteers, communities like ours would have no beating heart. They are the glue that sticks us together.

We need SoSEP to recognise the value of the volunteer and to provide support to build local capacity so that we can create local solutions for local problems.

We need SoSEP to change the way the ALL the public sector agencies think about communities.

We need SoSEP to consider communities as holistic environments not as individual parts or departments that fit into government policy because its easier to create rules that we must all abide by.

We need this new agency to exploit the expertise communities have locally NOT try to fit a square peg into a round hole. SoSEP has the chance to change that. We know our needs better than anyone else, we know our capabilities better than anyone else, we need resource to work with us to make positive change not impose change on us.

Evidence – 2015 consultation involving the community as part of Dundee University study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, into Resilient Communities and how climate change impacts on those in remote rural place – we participated, the findings were acknowledged by all who participated; public sector agencies need to understand more fully the challenges of living and working in rural communities and that **better communication** between themselves as well as engagement with the locality to keep this momentum and flow of dialogue going.
Outcomes: a report and no action.

2. OUR YOUNG ARE LEAVING - every young person that leaves our community is replaced by 2 retired people. Whilst we welcome population growth we do not want to live in a retirement village. If current trends continue, in 25 years', time we will have lost over 20% of our working population (currently 53% dropping to 43%). The impact of that on local business and service provision will be significant if we don't do something to make change happen and do it now. We **MUST** give our young people a future.

Evidence: We **MUST** change the rules about social housing schemes so that we can home our own. Recently a young widow with children was refused a 3bedroom home that had become vacant because she has too few points, it was awarded to a family outside the district because they had more. It was considered better to home a family from elsewhere who don't contribute locally because they have more points. How can we hope to keep our young people when we send out messages like that to our own? **WE DON'T WANT YOU.** Newcastleton **DOES** want them. And in order to change this process under the current 'rules' **WE**, as a community, must create our own social housing association. **WE** will do that because we care about our future and want to offer homes to our young people - but we need the capacity and resources to do so. SoSEP has the chance to influence the way social housing is structured and operated so that we can keep our own.

3. POOR QUALIFICATION ATTAINMENT LEVELS – We **MUST** make it easier for our young people to continue learning and progress locally to achieve their ambitions. We cannot continue to send them away to see them never return. At the very least we must give them every opportunity to return once their education is complete and to earn a reasonable living locally. We need accessible learning and apprenticeships locally, not 2 to 3 hours away and we need affordable homes for them to be able to live back in the community.

Evidence: how long does it take to get to the Gala campus and return? 2 hours on a good day/ 3 on a bad - and that's just one way. **How others do it** – Lairg Apprentice Scheme; locally designed to meet the needs of the community; engineering (windfarms), farming and forestry, timber skills etc. A local program for

local students to study AND work to gain attainment levels.

4. LACK OF CONNECTIVITY continues to blight us, we still have premises who cannot receive internet and businesses continue to struggle to provide basic services.

Evidence: Under the old Community Broadband Scotland regime, we put in huge hours and resource along with loads of other impacted rural communities to set out our store to deliver our own service. As this quango never had enough legs to deliver the end game it proved to be a huge waste of public money, time and effort. **We are now promised R100 but where it is?** Why can't the public sector agencies engage locally to prioritise the rollout? IF we know now what areas are never going to be connected then we can plan accordingly – saying we will all get R100 is madness.

Community schemes will be needed. SoSEP can ensure that investment is made in the right places and to lobby for budget to ensure that the promise of R100 is delivered. We cannot continue to wait until the money has run out and the cupboard is bare to be told we are on your own. We have waited long enough.

5. TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE – since 1969 Newcastleton has had to rely solely on the road network for access. Excepting from the south, all roads leading to our village are single track. During 2017/2018 winter season we were cut off on three occasions – pot holes caused by wood waggons and severe weather hugely damaging our network. The road was so dangerous that the Community Council sought advice as to whether it should be closed or not. Only this action got results, but it is not acceptable that our voices are not heard, and actions not taken sooner to prevent such damage. We need others to recognise the key 'access routes' which might be B roads but are none the less the main arterial connections that cannot be closed. **SoSEP can help prioritise these routes so that budget can always be allocated to ensure their accessibility.** We cannot expect the local authority to 'pitch' for budget from the Strategic Transport Network before our roads are protected. Wood waggons damage our roads, budget should be allocated to sort them. The timber marketplace needs to pay for this in a better policed and structured manner than ad hoc knee jerk reactions at times of crisis.

Evidence: Given our remote rural location our businesses do not rely on passing traffic for their main income – although this is very welcome during the tourist season. They rely on local trade and to serve this market they must have a supply chain that works – access for delivery to keep our local economy afloat is paramount. Our largest business relies on coaches to transport guests to their site. A diversion of 120 miles was needed to get coaches through and as a result it is doubtful they will return. We work extremely hard to attract business to our village, the lack of joined-upness within public sector agencies inhibits our growth and, in this case, damaged our reputation as a positive place to visit as we were 'off the beaten track' – literally.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT - lack of frequent services inhibit us, specifically two of our most vulnerable groups; the young and the old. Our young cannot easily

access further education programs, meet with their peers, or participate in sport and social activities outside the village; going to the pictures is something most young people take for granted but not ours. Our elderly experience very challenging issues; getting to a hospital appointment and other health associated appointments like the dentists, opticians or even doing a supermarket shop. We commonly hear them say 'its time to go over the hill to die' - they are born and bred in our place but are forced to spend their last days away from us without their loved ones close by. This is a hugely debilitating and a stressful approach to old age, knowing you will be parted from your friends and family at your most needy time.

2019 sees the 50th anniversary of **Newcastleton's Old Peoples Welfare Group** volunteers celebrating 50 years of community service. This group was formed as a direct result of the failure of the Waverley Line. Its purpose, and it does this still today, is to transport those in need to hospital or to appointments. It was established for the over 60's but today the demand for this service is far wider than that.

It costs us, as a community, over £1k pr month to provide this service, using volunteer drivers and their vehicles. It isn't a taxi service, it is a car scheme, probably one of the very first to operate and still in existence today. We have no capacity to operate a local transport scheme like Teviot Wheels, the set-up cost, and admin required to deliver this is beyond us. Our scheme works for us, but it can only support THE most vulnerable. We cannot provide for our young people, so something has to change.

We need SoSEP to determine the right transport scheme for the south of Scotland, so it is accessible to all and meets the needs of the communities it serves. Now and for future generations.

Newcastleton believes that the way forward is to bring back the railway, to reconnect the disconnected south of Scotland with the rest of the marketplace. We hope to work with SoSEP to deliver the right strategy for the Borders.

Newcastleton has a reputation for fighting above its weight. Its most famous fight was the one to try to save the railway, 50 years ago last week Saturday January 4th/5th 1969, saw the last train leave Edinburgh for London on the Waverley Line. Locals stopped the train at Newcastleton by leaving the crossing gates open and standing on the line in protest at its closure. We knew then what a catastrophic impact closing the line would be on us and the many other small communities it served. No one in authority listened to the community then, but we are grateful for the opportunity to speak now.

2019 sees the 50th anniversary of its closure but we see no reason to celebrate its demise, indeed we continue to fight for its reinstatement and hope SoSEP will engage with the Scottish and UK governments to ensure that the feasibility study, proposed as part of the Borderlands initiative, gets the go ahead regardless of the outcome of Borderlands. WE all need this study to determine the way forward for this part of Southern Scotland, it could deliver jobs, revolutionise the timber industry as well as give us a lifeline offering so many other opportunities. SoSEP

must have the necessary voice to be heard representing the peoples and the places of the South.

Ann Johnstone

The Bill must state clear aims for environmental issues so that the SOSE Board must include environmental issues in every aspect of SOSE's strategy, action plan and day-to-day delivery.

On 14th January 2019, in his response to Clair McFarlane, about the absence of marine and coastal issues in the Bill, Stewart Stevenson said, "Para 5(1)(b) 'Furthering the amenity and environment ...' is overarching so that the Board can include what is needed". He said this without any acknowledgment that the Bill does expand upon Para 5(1)(a) 'Furthering the economic and social development ...' and it does so with a list of what is to be included.

In my opinion, an organisation, whose primary purpose is to further economic development, has little need for direction on that topic in the Bill. However, such an organisation could stray from the community's views and priorities with regard to environmental issues (which came out so strongly during SOSE consultation last year), and therefore NEEDS to be steered by the Bill on 'Furthering the amenity and environment ...'.

SOSE will have four broad roles with regard to environmental issues:

- 1) as a user of resources and owner of facilities
- 2) as a provider of services which are affected by our environment
- 3) as a body whose policies can effect change in others; and
- 4) as a community leader which can encourage others to take action.

This is why I think SOSE needs clear environmental aims in the Bill, and, after the discussion on Monday, additionally, that representatives of communities, businesses and organisations operating in the South of Scotland need to be consulted on appointments to the Board, to ensure environmental issues are championed by the Board.

I suggest the SOSE Bill should take the leads from and align with 'Tourism Scotland 2020', 'Ambition 2030', 'Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029: consultation draft' and the 'Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill' with their strong themes of sustainable, responsible growth and responding to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This would also respond to the views and priorities, with regard to environmental issues, of communities, businesses and organisations operating in the South of Scotland, by revising paragraph 5 (2) e.g.:

(2) Furthering the economic and social development of the South of Scotland includes—

- a) supporting inclusive, sustainable economic growth,

- b) providing, maintaining and safeguarding employment,
- c) enhancing skills and capacities relevant to employment,
- d) encouraging business start-ups and entrepreneurship,
- e) promoting commercial and industrial—
- f) efficiency,
- g) innovativeness,
- h) international competitiveness,
- i) *sustainability (economic, social and environmental), and*
- j) *resilience (climate and business)*
- k) supporting community organisations to help them meet their communities' needs.

Para 5(1)(b) should be expanded upon, about what is included, in the same way that Para 5(2) expands upon Para 5(1)(a) e.g.

- (3) *Furthering the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland includes-*
- (a) *promoting responsible stewardship of the natural and built environment*
 - (b) *encouraging responsible resource management including land use*
 - (c) *enhancing access to the natural environment*
 - (d) ??

With regard to Schedule 1, Part 1 'Members', Paragraph 1 'Appointment of members', the choice of people for the Board must be approved through consultation with appropriately knowledgeable groups from the South of Scotland. Suggested revisions:

1 (2) The Scottish Ministers may only appoint a person who they *and an appropriate group to represent the interests of the communities, businesses and organisations operating in the South of Scotland,* are satisfied has *proper knowledge and/or experience* relevant to the discharge of South of Scotland Enterprise's functions.

The Board or an environment champion on the Board should have the support of a fully resourced 'environment' reference group. The reference group must be composed so that they are capable of providing an expert, balanced representation of the broad mosaic of environmental issues that the SOSE Board will need to consider.

FOLLOWING THE WORKSHOP IN GALASHIELS ON 23 JANUARY 2019

Trevor Jackson, Charlesfield Farms

One aspect that was not fully covered is the part that sport and festivals can play in attracting economic activity, and also to promote more active lifestyles. I believe this is an important strand that the agency can promote and nurture more effectively than the mainstream agencies, as from my experience from Melrose Rugby Club, the organisation often falls between agency remits and priorities, so the “one-stop shop” of the new agency should help to overcome that situation.

I would also request that, from my experience of voluntary organisations, caution is exercised over fully democratising the board and that properly qualified and experienced individuals are invited or selected to stand, but perhaps there could be a “community champion” to advise or scrutinise the board on the agency’s performance.

John Mclennan, A Greener Melrose

Economic challenges and opportunities

- (a) Much talk was about depopulation and the difficulties of a widely dispersed and isolated community and the need to attract both incomers and returners. A thriving rural economy is important but equally, if not more so, is a cohesive, engaged community. The bill as it currently stands is over-focussed on economic issues (ie. examples of ways to achieve the aims a-e), the social aims are under-represented (ie. example f), and the amenity and environmental aims are not mentioned at all. This imbalance must be addressed so as not to skew the focus of the Agency and expectations of it.
- (b) The Agency should focus on supporting small businesses not large ones.
- (c) Small and medium businesses are usually started by one or two entrepreneurs, not economists and, even as some start-up businesses grow into large ones, little thought is given to the subject of economics. Economic thinking is currently becoming broader, more inclusive than previously, adding parts played by the household, the commons and the state to that played by the market, the traditional focus. This broader vision has the potential to expand our awareness and stimulate a more inclusive, thriving economy.
- (d) What does success look like? How can we measure the success, or not, of an economy; its value? We need to choose our measures with care and not rely simply on GDP or other financial criteria. How should we measure¹ the other aims: social, amenities and the environment?

¹ The foundations of a beneficent society include:- food, clean water, housing, sanitation, energy, education, health & healthcare, democracy and political voice & engagement, social equity, gender equality, networks, income & work, peace & justice.

Expectations and consultation

- (e) The relationship between the SoSEA and other agencies needs to be clarified: they all need to integrate not duplicate.

Aims of the new agency

- (f) The aims are fine but unbalanced in favour of the economy to the detriment of the social, amenities and the environment (point (a) above). The aims should not be divided into two but amalgamated, reading for example: 'The South of Scotland Enterprise's aims are to further the South of Scotland's economic and social development, improve the amenity and the environment'.
- (g) Aim 2a includes the word 'growth' which presupposes that growth is good. This is not always so. The book 'Limits to Growth' detailed the problems associated with focussing on growth in a finite world and in a recent update 30 years later the authors show how their predictions were accurate. Also, the word 'sustainable' is missing (note: sustainable activity does not equate to zero growth). Aim 2a would be improved by including it, reading: 'supporting inclusive and sustainable economic activity', replacing the word 'growth' by activity.

Accountability

- (h) The chair of the Agency should be accountable to the Minister who is accountable to Parliament.
- (i) The members of the board should be appointed by the Minister from a longlist put forward by local communities who should have the opportunity to examine them and indicate to the Minister their indicative preferences.
- (j) There must be a transparent mechanism of removing people from their position who fail to meet their obligations.

Heather Batsch – The Bridge

Economic challenges and opportunities

Population Demographic:

- We need to attract our young people to come back – or keep them. We have a strong Third Sector network of youth work organisations, and a wide range of cultural and sporting activities. The new Centre for Textiles training in Hawick should feed in to our heritage industries and to the Higher Education opportunities available at Heriot Watt University in Galashiels. The courses there attract students from all over the world, but not enough

The ecological issues relating to the state of the environment include:- climate change, ozone depletion, air & water pollution, chemical pollution, biodiversity, land conversion, freshwater withdrawals, nitrogen & phosphorous loading, ocean acidification, waste management, energy use & generation split, natural resources – renewable and unrennewable.

Assessing these items, though challenging, would generate a comprehensive picture of the states of the society, the amenity, and the environment in the South of Scotland.

from the region as there has been a limited local pipeline into this industry. Use it or lose it!

- We must encourage people to come and live/work here – but NOT as a region full of care homes.
- Older people make a huge contribution to the Third Sector – they bring expertise and energy to our Boards. But as people get older they also need more support – creates demand and opportunities for enterprising solutions across sectors.

Our heritage and natural resources:

- We need to put the South of Scotland on the map – it has huge strengths (natural and built heritage, culture, sport), as well as challenges, but is widely ignored by media. Why go to Orkney to interview people about poor mobile and Broadband connections outside the towns – they are right here!
- Our industrial past has so many lessons for us now - our mills harnessed renewable energy from water, this is an opportunity for enterprise development across all sectors.

Connectivity:

- R100 needs to get here faster! Please be clear if certain areas will lose out, so that community solutions can be explored for the more remote areas.
- Transport: Borders Railway will make a huge difference if it comes to Hawick and through to Carlisle – a fabulous tourist route that will bring more people (and businesses) here! But bus services/accessible transport are needed more than ever to connect up to the new rail link. We have been working for many years to develop accessible community transport across the Scottish Borders to complement public service provision.

Strong community identity:

- The Scottish Borders is characterised by strong communities who are used to delivering for themselves – there has been a reliance on Third Sector for a very long time to meet needs and fill gaps in public service provision. The social/community focus of the new Agency is welcomed. Over the past 10 years, more and more communities are realising how much impact they can have on local economic regeneration. We are active in supporting the growth of local development Trusts, which have a structure that can engage local people in action planning and deliver on community regeneration.
- We have a long history of community development support for enterprising communities and social enterprises, via Third Sector Interface (TSI) organisations in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway, and their predecessor CVS. We are connected, and our impact far outweighs the very limited public funding we receive.

- There is a long history of partnership working in Scottish Borders – the New Ways Partnership (20 years ago) brought agencies, communities and third sector together, long before Community Planning Partnerships were invented. Scottish Enterprise Borders played a significant role in the partnership, but when they went the SE resources for the area were depleted.
- Bottom up approach works best!

Expectations and consultation

Location: such a large geographic spread confirms a need to co-locate staff – but those working with communities should link to the Third Sector Interface (TSI). As the main development support organisations for the Third Sector and Communities, we already have local Community Resource Centres in a variety of locations throughout the area, so our service – and our contacts – are fundamentally local. We are core funded through Scottish Government to:

- Build intelligence
- Give our sector a Voice
- Build capacity
- Connect

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- We **MUST** work closely together to maximise the benefit for our communities – geographic and communities of interest – and avoid duplication of effort.
- The SPiCE Briefing on the SOSE Bill says that SE properties will transfer to the SOSE Agency – but **NOT** if they sell them off first!! Eg Tweed Horizons – a major conference centre/business units property, owned by SE and developed with public money, has just been put on the market, for sale at £400,000. Can that be stopped? Can SOSEP buy it? This resource in the central Borders area is well used by all sectors.
- There must be on-going consultation on the Action Plan in due course – the Bill is high-level, the Action Plan will hopefully deliver on the needs and aspirations of our communities. Although the Bill as it stands does not include the need to consult, we believe that the Community Empowerment Act should cover that requirement, as SOSE will become one of the bodies identified as a public service provider, and as such must be included as a Community Planning Partner, subject also to participation requests and the legislation in respect of participation in public decision making.

Aims of the new agency

Furthering the economic and social development of the South of Scotland

- “Supporting community organisations to meet their communities’ needs ” tallies exactly with the aims and remit of the TSI. We welcome the new SOSE agency, and have been asking for similar support to that provided by HIE for many years.

- We have developed a number of thematic networks over the years and act as a conduit for information to communities and third sector organisations. We are VERY well connected into our local communities. We would be happy to work with the new Agency to speed up the development phase in respect of their community remit.

Accountability

The new SOSE agency MUST be accountable to the people – whether they are in business, involved in Third Sector or Community organisations.

This could be achieved by cross sector participation on the Board, possibly nominated through a democratic process involving the different 'constituencies' who will be most impacted the new Agency, eg: small businesses, community and social enterprises. The new Board must consult widely on the Action Plan.