



SSDA Operational Plan

2023 – 2024



CEO Introduction:

Since taking up post at the start of February 2023, I've been keen to meet as many businesses and members as possible. I've reached out to dozens of key groups, businesses and partners and have established digital systems for any member that wishes to, to directly schedule digital meetings to share their priorities for the SSDA (members can still do this, using [this link](#)). This has allowed me to have hundreds of meetings with businesses and key partners (digitally and in-person) in my first four months in post. Thank to all who have taken the time to meet me and share your insight, ideas and inspiration.

At our sell-out 14th March [Annual Conference](#) I shared my vision for the SSDA as the largest, most inclusive, strategic and impactful Destination Management and Marketing Organisation in Scotland. It was hugely inspiring to meet so many of our brilliant members and partners all together and I am hugely grateful for all the energy, passion, expertise and support that businesses shared that day.

Keen to continue listening, in April I put out a detailed member survey to really understand members' priorities. I promised that within a couple of months I would publicly share a detailed operational plan, covering the next 12-months, informed by what members said in this survey and the many meetings I've had since February. Pages 6-7 of this report summarise some of the key points of feedback from members in the survey.

While there is lots of very positive data from members in the survey (I've included some of the quotes on page 7), I recognise that there are areas where progress and improvement is needed. The SSDA has not been as open, engaging, member-led, pro-active or impactful as some members would have liked. This will change.

I hope this report makes clear how the feedback we have received has directly influenced our operational plans for the coming year.

From page 8, for each of the SSDA's four strategic pillars, I set out four key, headline operational priorities for the next 12 months. For all sixteen of these operational priorities, I state exactly what proportion of members ranked that piece of work as being "very" or "quite" useful.

Every piece of work outlined in this operational plan has had at least 80% of member respondents describe it as "useful" for their business. I think it is important we are member-led in this way.

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Clarity of purpose is also hugely important to me: I want to be absolutely clear what I want the SSDA to be and to achieve, and I am keen to be held accountable for the delivery of these plans.

So, for all sixteen operational priorities I summarise in one sentence what impact will be achieved and set month-by-month targets and waypoints against which members can review progress in quarterly delivery update reports. Once each quarterly update report is published, we will have an open meeting in which members can ask questions of me, share feedback and get involved.

I hope this document makes clear the direction in which I will take the SSDA to make it an energetic, inclusive, business-led, dynamic and impactful DMMO. Through partnership, collaboration and an inclusive, broad-based approach, I want the SSDA to represent and support all of the South of Scotland's visitor economy.

I am delighted that of those who gave feedback after our Annual Conference 96% of members said they supported this vision for the SSDA [4% wanted to "wait and see" (very understandable!) and 0% were opposed].

I am immensely grateful to the SSDA's Board of business leaders, our brilliant staff team and colleagues in SoSE, our lead funder, who have helped develop this operational plan covering April 2023 – March 2024.

This document sets out how, over the next 12 months, the SSDA will:

1. Attract more and better-spending visitors to the region.
2. Create a coordinated, community of businesses across our region, working together for greater collective impact.

3. Support businesses to benefit from key strategic opportunities upcoming.
4. Help progress the South of Scotland's journey to become a quality, year-round destination.
5. Bring together all relevant organisations across the public and private sector, to unite behind one single responsible tourism strategy which will underpin all our work.
6. Deliver a bottom-up, locally-led Destination Development Plan designed by and owned by businesses themselves.

I want the SSDA to be ambitious, innovative and strategic, while also being honest about the limits of our capacity. We are a small team with limited capacity and budget: a handful of passionate individuals working to support hundreds of businesses and a £600m+ sector, across a region that takes 4.5 hours to travel across. We must be honest that we cannot do everything for everyone but I believe that if we all push together (private and public sector alike), we can achieve amazing things.

Hopefully this document gives members and partners valuable clarity as to the SSDA's upcoming plans, while also giving enough flexibility and agility for our small but inspiring staff team to adapt and evolve plans, based on experience, feedback and new opportunities. I would love to hear your feedback.

'Team SSDA' looks forward to working with you to deliver these plans through partnership and collaboration. Together, we are more than the sum of our parts. And together, we will transform our visitor economy.

Scotland Starts Here.

David Hope-Jones OBE
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Schedule a meeting with me: https://calendly.com/david_sdda/meetme

“96% of members said they supported this vision for the SSDA”

Strategic Framework:

As presented at the SSDA's 2022 Annual Conference, the SSDA will work towards four Strategic Pillars:

SSDA PILLARS	IN 2025 SUCCESS WILL BE DEFINED AS ...	SO THAT THESE OUTCOMES WILL BE ACHIEVED...	THEREFORE THE PURPOSE OF SSDA IS TO...
INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSDA is the go-to organisation for all tourism activity and infrastructure Vibrant, active and growing membership Better product, better experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thriving industry Valid representation at gov't level Tourism is the primary driving force behind the south of Scotland's economic and community wealth The SSDA is the sole voice for tourism in the south and go to organisation for examples of best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer tangible/ results driven leadership to the industry Influence decisions and investment Educate / engage / inspire / facilitate / deliver change
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT & BUSINESS READINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSDA has secured membership from all businesses and membership subs account for 25% of SSDA's operational income Processes in place for consistent opportunities and engagement across SoS A trusted consistent team delivering dedication and commitment 	All business members are trading online with a year round programme of experiences showcasing local artisan makers and producers, natural and cultural heritage	To provide/facilitate tailored training and business transformation programmes to ensure all businesses have the ability to trade online and work with the travel trade
PLACE BRANDING & MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scotland Starts Here is fully established as the place brand and adopted across multiple sectors with strategic marketing campaigns delivered year on year Identity visible across the South – merchandise, marketing, business, promotion, branding everywhere First recognised brand in Scotland 	The south is widely recognised by focus market segments as as a prime destination with extensive bookable product	Establish and roll out the Scotland Starts Here positioning across the south of Scotland and instigate annual strategic marketing campaigns that respond to emerging trends and stimulate interest from new markets that match the SoS offer
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South of Scotland is recognised as one of Scotland's prime destinations which has effectively attracted lots of visitors and dispersed all visitors based on existing infrastructure and planned investments Gaps identified and then plugged Create a thriving and entrepreneurial culture Businesses adapt to covid 19 and try new things to grow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment South of Scotland is on everyone's must visit list Good infrastructure provision mirroring demand and responding to pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product development Coast/Nature/Heritage/Food and Drink Develop and then oversee the delivery of a strategic destination development strategy with partnership support Devise a Destination Development Plan to influence investment decisions by partners

We will continue to work within and towards these Strategic Pillars, with this Operational Plan setting out four key areas of work in the next year which will help us advance these four pillars.

This operational plan takes us to March 2024, by which time the South of Scotland's multi-agency regional Responsible Tourism Strategy will be finalised and underway and we will work to ensure all further SSDA is clearly designed around this new regional strategy.

Values and ways of working:

In the April 2023 Annual Survey, members told us they want the SSDA to be:



Accordingly, we will ensure that, in all it does, the SSDA will be guided by the following values/ways of working:

- **Inclusive and Supportive:** Inclusive, broad-based membership, representing & assisting all
- **Energetic and Positive:** Finding the opportunities, not the problems
- **Ambitious and Inspiring:** Exciting, optimistic, audacious vision
- **Collective and Collaborative:** Community of businesses & strong, respectful partnerships
- **Strategic and Focused:** Clarity of purpose in all we do: ‘why’ before ‘what’ & ‘how’
- **Pragmatic and Efficient:** Focusing capacity where it drives delivery, asking ‘why’
- **Listening and Responsive:** Regular feedback from members informing our work
- **Analytical and Learning:** Measuring what matters and changing if not working
- **Transparent and Engaging:** Co-designing with members in open, inclusive meetings
- **Present and Local:** Regularly meeting local groups & amplifying local identities
- **Agile and Innovative:** Embracing technology and new opportunities
- **Loud and Proud!:** Sharing our wins, amplifying members, celebrating region
- **Driven and Impactful:** Focused on, and accountable to, clear strategic outcomes

I invite members to hold us accountable to these values and ways of working. Please let me know if you feel we are ever falling short.

Member Feedback:

85 businesses completed our detailed Annual Survey in April 2023. This member insight and feedback is invaluable for the SSSA and has very directly fed into our operational planning for the year to come. Here are some key exerts:

- 69% described the SSSA as being “useful” last year (43% “quite useful”, 17% “very useful”, 9% “extremely useful”)

- 75% said they felt the SSSA had been listening to their business over the last 12 months (37.5% “a lot”, 37.5% “a little”)

- 62% said they had tried to contact the SSSA over the last year, of whom 83% said the SSSA had been “very helpful” in their response.

Positive words to describe the SSSA included:



Negative words to describe the SSSA included:



- In order, our highest rated services last year were: **Media engagement** (70% rated “excellent” or “very good”); **Annual conference** (68%); **Email newsletters** (60%), SSH B2C Social media (59%), B2B Social media (58%), Marketing campaigns (57%), B2C Website (55%), B2B Website (49%), Networking (49%), Training (46%) and Travel trade (37%).

- 46% said the next 12 months would be better than *the last 12 months* for their business (22% “much better”, 24% “a bit better”, 27% “same”, 16% “bit worse”, 11% “much worse”)

- 48% said the next 12 months would be better *than 2019* (25% “much better”, 23% “a bit better”, 23% “same”, 15% “bit worse”, 12% “much worse”)

- Members’ biggest concerns were for the next year were: **cost of living, energy crisis, consumer confidence, political uncertainty, visitor expectations, regulation and red tape, operating capacity, lack of bookings/visitors, staffing, DRS**

- 58% said SSSA membership was “good value” and 25% said “average value”

- 81% said they would “definitely” or “probably” renew their membership

- 74% said they would attend a twice-yearly in-person meeting of tourism and hospitality organisations in your immediate area, to agree a local, bottom-up destination development plan and build local collaborations.

- Members want more: local one-to-one engagements, networking opportunities, B2B engagement, sharing between members, staff responsiveness, training and support, town representation on website

- 71% said the SSDA was “excellent” or “good” at communicating with members. This could be improved by: more local meetings, quarterly webinar to update members what the SSDA is doing, direct email updates,

- Members want training in: digital marketing, tourism trends, travel trade, booking platforms, sustainability, financial, recruitment, developing a business, STL legislation

- 89% said they would be willing to share their visitor data with the SSDA (32% “annually”, 48% “quarterly”, 9% “monthly”)

Member quotes included:

“Really appreciate the SSDA meeting with us, sounds simplistic but the meetings have made us feel valued”

“The SSDA provided me with a travel trade advertising opportunity”

“Met David a couple of times . Very impressed with his ability to connect folk and listen.”

“Greatly enjoy the collaborative aspect of your work, and feel it can only be a positive for everyone involved.”

“SSDA team are really communicative and enthusiastic about developing new ideas and working together.”

“Thank you for all your support over the last year. I look forward to seeing what the next twelve months brings and will do all I can to support your work.”

“You have been very helpful and shown great interest in helping us”

“thank you for starting to be pro-active as I understand that successful DAs can make the difference between a successful self-catering business and one that fails - previously little has been happening so I am hoping to see positive change from your activities. Thank you”

“Thanks for all your help and support over the past year and I appreciate what you are doing to increase visitors to our area which contributes to our local economy.”

“The conference in March was excellent. It brought hope that things will be more proactive & inclusive going forward.”

“The SSDA have been so supportive of our products and services and have always been on hand to answer a silly question or offer advice. I enjoy working with you and look forward to continuing that going forward.”

“You are making a positive impact!”

“Please keep up the good work that has been started, it is a journey and I'm sure that we will get there, we just need to speed it up a little. as we are way behind everywhere else.”

“SSDA has genuinely made a huge difference to the region through good, targeted marketing campaigns, bringing businesses together and making actual change that is being recognised by others for instance through the lonely planet article. Keep up the good work it is being noticed!!!”

“the conference was excellent and brought a new and proactive approach to the future”

“I think these plans are all incredibly useful. I recognise there is a huge amount of work involved in achieving these goals and wish the SSDA every success in the year ahead. I feel that businesses in the South will be keen to support them in all of these different areas, where they can, and by working together we can really put the South on the must-experience map”

1 INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

1.1 Responsible Tourism Strategy

[86.8% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

As agreed in the Regional Economic Strategy, all key agencies in the region are coming together in 2023 to develop and agree a single Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland. The SSDA is at the centre of this work, with SoSE, VisitScotland, Scottish Borders Council and D&G Council. The SSDA sees its role as ensuring that businesses are represented throughout the development of this strategy. We are therefore hosting 14 in-person meetings across the region in which businesses can directly feed in their priorities for the future of the South of Scotland’s visitor economy. We are establishing a formal Advisory Group, on which businesses will play a crucial role, keeping the process on track and ensuring the end strategy is relevant to, and supportive of, businesses and communities across the region. By the Autumn we will have a draft strategy and action plan, which we will share with members and invite feedback and edits on, before finalised. By having one, single, multi-agency tourism strategy we will remove duplication and confusion, allowing maximum impact for our region.

1.2 Sharing Visitor Data:

[90.9% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We recognise that there is a lack of quality, timely visitor economy data and we are committed to addressing this. In July we are bringing together all relevant agencies (SoSE, VisitScotland, D&G Council, SB Council, STA, ASVA, 56 Degrees, The Moffat Centre, etc) to agree a Consolidated Data Strategy. Time is precious for businesses and we need to be sure we are not asking the same questions of the same businesses. We must collaborate better and have integrated systems for sharing timely, useful and usable data with businesses, such that they can understand trends, benchmark against others and identify opportunities. If we are confident we will not be duplicating others and there is strong interest from members, we will establish systems to collect and collate key visitor data from our members, quickly sharing the results with members. This would allow us to ensure we understand the impact of the SSDA’s work building the visitor economy of the South of Scotland.

1.3 Partnership and Collaboration:

[92% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Just as we encourage and support businesses to share, collaborate and coordinate with other businesses, it is incumbent on the SSDA to itself partner and collaborate with all relevant agencies and networks. This will be visible through 2023 as we partner with SoSE, VisitScotland and the two local authorities to develop a single tourism strategy for the region. Beyond this, we will actively reach out to all other relevant groups, to ensure the SSDA is never duplicating or competing with any other organisation. We feel it is especially important that we have an integrated and complementary offer with other membership networks, as we recognise businesses are approached by different networks offering their services. We will look to agree formal partnership agreements which we will share with members, outlining: how we will work together, how we will ensure we are never duplicating, and how we will maximise our collective impact for the businesses. We want the SSDA to be the go-to, overarching network for the South of Scotland, supportive of and fully integrated with, the other excellent networks out there.

1.4 South of Scotland Thistle Awards:

[81.1% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Until now, businesses in D&G have been grouped with Glasgow and the West of Scotland for the regional stage of the prestigious Thistle Awards, competing with businesses from 13 local authorities. Those in the Borders have been in the Edinburgh and the East of Scotland region, competing with 12 local authorities. With the full support of VisitScotland and SoSE, the South of Scotland is now its own Thistles Region, run by the SSDA. This means that rural businesses in the south are now only competing with rural businesses in the south. It allows us to inspire and celebrate quality in our visitor economy and ensure the South is well represented in the national finals. We will use the Thistle Awards to: build pride and confidence in all the South has to offer visitors; create energy, positivity and goodwill in our sector; build wider public awareness and support as to the benefits of the visitor economy; and to cement the idea of the South as a ‘go to rather than go through’ destination.

	Ref	Project	Strategic Objective	Delivery Waypoints											
				April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Industry Leadership & Capacity Building	1.1	Regional Tourism Strategy	The SSDA an integral part in co-developing the multi-agency regional tourism strategy, facilitating significant input and engagement from businesses across the region	Planning	Consultations with 14 in-person meetings across the region to seek business input				First Draft publicly shared	Consultations on the first draft	Strategy agreed		Strategy published	Strategy implementation underway	
	1.2	Sharing Visitor Data	Multi-agency Consolidated Data Strategy agreed and, if member appetite, quarterly collection of data from members, to build a deeper understanding of trends, collect timely data and real-world feedback				Board morning on data with key partners			Data collection (if clear value in this)	Data shared (if clear value in this)		Data collection (if clear value in this)	Data shared (if clear value in this)	
	1.3	Partnership and collaboration	Formal partnership and collaboration agreements in place with all relevant organisations, to ensure the SSDA is not duplicating or competing with any other network, and members have a clear understanding of the complementary offers	Agree strategy for how we work with other organisations			Two partnership agreements signed with key organisations relevant to our work	Two partnership agreements signed with key organisations relevant to our work	Partnership and collaboration webpage with details of formal agreements and joint working		Continued to expand and strengthen agreements			Review all agreements	
	1.4	South of Scotland Thistle Awards	SSDA hosts a successful inaugural South of Scotland Thistle Awards, building pride and confidence within the region and associating the south with quality	Applications for Thistle Awards	Venue & date agreed		Shortlist announced			Regional South of Scotland awards		National awards	Review partnership with VS		

2 INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND BUSINESS READINESS

2.1 Annual Conference:

[84.3% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Member feedback from our sell-out March 2023 Annual Conference was outstanding, with 82% describing it as an “excellent” event, 83% saying they got relevant, useful information, and many members made new, lasting, useful connections with other businesses. We recognise that coming together in person is crucial for our network and the visitor economy in our region. Planning for our March 2024 Annual Conference is already underway and we will ensure we are led by our members: what they find most useful, what key topics and speakers we should have, and what formats work best for them. We will prioritise networking and use the event to share transferable learning between members in key areas. We look forward to seeing you there and value your input in the planning.

2.2 Inclusive Membership

[88.9% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We do not want the SSDA to be a niche membership network representing only certain businesses. Rather, we want to take an inclusive, broad-based approach to our network in which we encourage and support every business in the South of Scotland’s visitor economy to be an active part. We know that it’s important to maintain our own independent member income, beyond our core grant, so that we can be confident about our long-term sustainability as an organisation. We also want to find new ways of ensuring we are as inclusive as possible for as many businesses as possible. Further details to follow on how we will look to achieve this balance.

2.3 Member input and reporting:

[91.6% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We know that a great deal of the day-to-day work our small team is doing is not seen by members, including our work representing the South of Scotland with the travel trade, the media, social media, influencers, and others. We want to change this. We will therefore be publishing quarterly member reports, summarising the key activities and impact of the last period and plans for the coming quarter. We will also host digital meetings, open to every member, in which our CEO will talk through our activities and plans, inviting member questions, input, ideas and engagement. We want the SSDA to not be some distant corporate organisation but a community of businesses, working together, sharing ideas and feeding off each other’s energy, such that we are more than the sum of our parts.

2.4 Understanding the SSDA:

[88.4% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

If we are to be an inclusive, broad-based network, it is vital that we better explain who we are, what we do, and how businesses of all sizes can get involved. We know it’s confusing with so many acronyms and it’s important that we raise awareness of the SSDA as our B2B brand and ‘Scotland Starts Here’ as our consumer facing brand. To help us, we will look to better connect the two sides of the brand in our communications and we will produce a simple, sharable explainer video. We will also work with our partner agencies to find innovative and effective ways of explaining who does what, so its simple and easy for members to understand who they go to for which need.

	Ref	Project	Strategic Objective	Delivery Waypoints											
				April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Industry Engagement & Business Readiness	2.1	Annual Conference	Annual conference delivered in the spring, with 200+ members attending and 80% rating the event as "good" or "excellent"	Review impact & learning							Event Planning, informed by member input and feedback from last year				Conference
	2.2	Inclusive membership	SSDA moved to an inclusive, 'big tent' membership model, with membership nearer 1,000 by 2025, representing all of the visitor economy across the South of Scotland		Board review		Digital streamlining of membership systems				Membership outreach push, to make as inclusive as possible			Review success	
	2.3	Membership input and reporting	Members actively listened to and engaged and valued by the SSDA, with quarterly activity and impact reports and open digital meetings for members to feed in directly to CEO	Annual Member Survey	Develop Operational Plan	Launch Operational Plan		Meet Partner & Bespoke members			Member update Zoom meeting			Member update Zoom meeting	Annual Member Survey
	2.4	Understanding the SSDA	Greater awareness and clarity about the SSDA, achieved through short explainer video, better connecting B2B & B2C brands, and clearer multi-agency signposting			Concept agreed	Video commissioned	Video produced			Video launched			Reviewed	
					Concept of a 'front end' to better explain respective roles, agreed with partners		Format & wording agreed		New multi-agency signposting 'front end' asset made live to explain who to go to for what						

3 PLACE BRANDING AND MARKETING

3.1 Member-led Marketing Campaigns:

[88% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Marketing the South of Scotland to prospective visitors as a quality, year-round destination is core to the SSDA’s function. It’s what we’re here for and will remain a very significant part of our small team’s activities. However, we hope Members will notice a different approach: we want to be far more member-led and locally present. We will be meeting in-person with businesses in all 14 areas of our region, working with them to co-design both how we market the region as a whole and also how we market their specific area – how we help tell *their* story. In this way, we will develop campaigns which speak to what our destination offers visitors, both locally and regionally. We have ring-fenced specific marketing budget to commission videos and digital assets of 14 towns/ areas across the destination.

3.2 Increasing the impact of ‘Scotland Starts Here’:

[92.7% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We have an excellent app and two excellent websites but we feel that our brands are not visible enough within our destination. Visitors will not know to use our free app if they do not know it exists. Through 2023 we want to radically increase the visibility, and hence impact, of our collective ‘Scotland Starts Here’ brand. We will be working with members, the council, public transport hubs and Transport Scotland, to make ‘Scotland Starts Here’ omni-present across our region. We want members to have the right collateral in the right place to be able to signpost visitors to all the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ website and app has to offer. If, together, we do this well, we can develop a genuinely coordinated destination, in which visitors know exactly how to find their next accommodation, attraction or restaurant.

3.3 Website and app developments:

[92% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Listening to members, we know there are some improvements we need to make to our B2B www.ssdalliance.com website, as well as our consumer-facing www.scotlandstartshere.com website and app. We want to simplify the user journey: making it easy to find what visitors are looking for and be directed to our members’ business listings. We also want to streamline our digital systems for member onboarding, renewal and other points of administration. This is about ensuring our systems are as efficient and effective as possible, and the SSDA is a long-term sustainable proposition, with staff time spent supporting members and championing the south, rather than performing routine admin functions.

3.4 Travel Trade:

[92.7% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

The travel trade is a general, all-encompassing term for all intermediaries between the product and the consumer. It is hugely diverse and it is a *hugely* important part of the visitor economy, but the travel trade can only bring in new visitors and develop new itineraries if they know and understand the destination. We will therefore continue to represent the South of Scotland, and all our members, by attending all relevant expos across the UK. We will have hundreds of meetings with travel trade businesses across the world, selling all the many benefits of the South of Scotland. We will also look to support members to become ‘travel trade ready’, so they can tap into these new business opportunities.

	Ref	Project	Strategic Objective	Delivery Waypoints											
				April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Place Branding & Marketing	3.1	Member-led Marketing Campaigns	The South of Scotland is promoted domestically and internationally as a quality, thriving, year-round destination through strategic marketing campaigns, with a high degree of member input, and a regular stream of positive, high-reach national media coverage and influencer content	Review past marketing campaigns		Marketing strategy developed	Cycling campaign			Seasonality campaign					Review strategy & campaigns
				Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature			Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature	Media trip & feature
				Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature			Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature	Influencer visit & feature
	3.2	Increasing impact of 'Scotland Starts Here'	SSH brand made visible across the region to increase use of SSH website and app, and make the SSDA an omnipresent and indispensable part of the visitor economy	Planning & Marketing purchase. Engage communities, businesses and local authorities to get buy-in from all			Campaign - getting physical collateral across the region to raise awareness of 'Scotland Starts Here' app and website								Review impact
	3.3	App and website developments	SSDA & SSH websites and SSH App updated and improved based on user feedback, with a streamlined and automated onboarding and membership fee payment, and greatly improved user journey		Website and app edits required		Website and app edits made								Review point
					Agree Tender docs for streamlining		Tender		Delivery						Review point
	3.4	Travel Trade	Increased awareness and engagement of, and enthusiasm for, the South of Scotland as a destination amongst the domestic and international trade trade community and increased number of businesses in the South of Scotland which are 'travel trade ready'	Represent at VS Connect, meeting 70 TT businesses	TT Business Newsletter	TT Directory updated & published	Travel Trade Business Newsletter		UKINbound Convention, Newsletter & Fam Trip (West)	Fam Trip (East)	Global European Travelmart & Newsletter		Britain and Ireland Marketplace & Newsletter		British Tourism Travel Show/ Newsletter
					SSH TT section review	Webinar training session (best practice)			Follow up TT Directory entries	Webinar or inperson training session	SSH TT Section doc review				

4 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Locally-led Destination Development

[96.2% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

Our destination development work will, first and foremost, be locally led: informed by local pressures, priorities and opportunities. Through the summer of 2023 we will work in collaboration with tourism businesses in 14 areas, to understand how we can support them, at a local area level, to develop the local visitor economy. As outlined above (1.1), we will arrange area meetings to seek local business input to the developing regional tourism strategy and we will dedicate a marketing budget to commission videos and digital assets to tell each area’s own story, with a high degree of local input (3.1). In addition, we will develop priorities specific to the area, which both the SSDA and local businesses will, together, contribute to and be accountable for. We want to generate a genuine two-way partnership with businesses locally: we are a community of like-minded businesses which believes if we work together we can be more than the sum of our parts.

4.2 Thematically-led Destination Development

[92.5% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

In addition to the above locally-led work (4.1), which is in-person and at the town level, we will also look to support specific themes, or strands, of destination development. This will mostly be done digitally as it will bring together businesses and partners across the region, engaged in a specific theme. Given we have only a handful of staff, we need to be careful not to overcommit and under-deliver. We will therefore only develop work in themes where there are very obvious, tangible outcomes we can achieve within the capacity available. These will likely be ‘task and finish’ type digital working groups, achieving specific objectives which demonstrably benefit members. It is likely areas we will explore possible thematic work in 2023/24 will include: equestrian, literary, dark skies, Roman and Iron Age, Food and Drink, and the SWC300.

4.3 Summer of Cycling:

[84.6% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We know that cycling isn’t everyone’s cup of tea but we passionately believe that it’s essential that we embrace the commercial opportunities of our 2023 summer of cycling. This includes the UCI cycling world champions, which has three events in the South of Scotland, with 1 million in-person spectators and an estimated global audience of 1.5 billion, across 160 markets. We want to turn this potential into real, financial benefit for our members. We have co-developed the 250-mile Kirkpatrick C2C cycle route, from Stranraer to Eyemouth, with SoSE, Visit Scotland, Sustrans and the two local authorities. We will work to market this new legacy asset in ways to attract cyclists that bring new business to the region rather than just cycle through it, capitalising on our history as the birthplace of the pedal bike (‘Cycling Starts Here!’). Cycling will never be our sole focus but we want to ensure we support as many members as possible to become ‘cycle ready’ so they can benefit.

4.4 Extending the season:

[90.9% of members said this would be “Very” or “Quite Useful”]

We recognise that many of our members feel that promoting the region in the summer months, when most businesses thrive, is less useful than the harder, but more impactful work of driving the shoulder season. There is little value bringing people into the region if there is no product when they arrive and hence we will work in tandem: listening to and working with businesses locally to give the right support at the right time to help businesses stay open, while also targeting marketing to ensure those that do, benefit from extra custom. It is important to be honest: this is a hard nut to crack. We cannot change the weather (!) but we can, together, explore innovative new ways of addressing the seasonality challenge for the benefit of all.

	Ref	Project	Strategic Objective	Delivery Waypoints											
				April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Destination Development	4.1	Locally-led Destination Development	Local businesses in 14 areas brought together by the SSDA, twice-yearly for in-person meetings, seeking input from businesses on key topics, agreeing collaboration at a local level and		Decide areas and begin to reach out to groups		10 videos produced and website		10 videos produced and website			Meet all 14 areas for second time			
						Meet all 14 areas		Launch Destination Development Plan at Thistle Awards							
	4.2	Thematically-led Destination Development	A handful of key thematic areas targeted, where the SSDA can achieve a specific outcome in stated timescales, as part of a destination development plan		Decide on initial priorities and communicate plan	Meet all groups (digitally) to agree action plan and outcomes			Deliver action plan to achieve stated outcomes			Review impact & learning			
	4.3	Summer of Cycling	SSDA an active part in ensuring a lasting positive impact on the visitor economy from the UCI championships, including through the 250-mile Kirkpatrick C2C cycle route	3 x cycling workshops				UCI							
				KC2C Media photo opp	Support businesses be cycle-ready	Digital/Soft launch of KC2C							KC2C Physical signage complete & hard launch		
	4.4	Seasonality	Clear strategy and action plan on how the SSDA will help extend the season through both its marketing and management functions, informed by listening to businesses at a town-level		Develop approach for consulting	1 x Digital meeting (and 14 in-person town meetings)		Strategy launched	Marketing campaign delivered			Review impact & learning			
						Marketing campaign developed									