

Scotland Starts Here: A Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland

2024-27 Action Plan:

Following extensive consultations, the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), VisitScotland, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Borders Council and all relevant public bodies have together launched a ten-year Responsible Tourism Strategy which will increase the visitor economy by £1bn over the next decade, supporting a further 6,000+ jobs.

The strategy has been welcomed and endorsed by the Convention of the South of Scotland, with Scottish Government ministerial and multi public agency commitment to key actions.

The vision, ambition, four strands (Inspire, Develop, Support and Responsible) and 22 areas of work in this Strategy are fixed for the next decade: this is our collective mission.

Behind this, we want to share the initial actions within these 22 areas of work, which will naturally evolve, as the landscape changes and new opportunities and challenges emerge.

Together, we are committed to transparent and accountable delivery. We invite you to judge us not by the words on the page, but the actions undertaken, and the results achieved.

To this end, we share here an initial three-year (2024-27) Action Plan which sits behind the Strategy. For each of the 109 actions identified, we state: which organisation has lead responsibility for delivery and which others are supporting; how these actions will be delivered; what indicative timescales will be followed; and what, together, we aim to have achieved by 2027. This is a dynamic document, with actions evolving based on learning, feedback and the changing businesses landscape.

Both the Strategy and Action Plan have unprecedented ambition for the South of Scotland's visitor economy. We may not achieve 100% of what we set out to in all areas, but it is right that we are aiming

high, working collaboratively and taking the necessary practical actions to deliver on this ambition in every possible respect.

Budgets will be aligned to this Action Plan wherever appropriate and multi-agency workgroups of key personnel will meet week-in week-out to push forwards delivery.

Four times a year we will publish an interim updated version of the Action Plan, with details about what has been achieved so far, what the next step is, and which individual has lead responsibility for delivery. After the first year of delivery, we will colour-code these quarterly updates (Red/Amber/Green), so it will be easy to assess progress at a glance.

Every year we will publish a full written update on what has been achieved that year, with public meetings and an open consultation through which businesses, communities and the public can give feedback, get involved and suggest edits to the specific actions. Following this annual consultation, updates will be published to the action plan, against which we will continue to report.

After three years, in March 2027, we will conclude this first Action Plan with an independent review of progress achieved against the ambition of the ten-year Strategy. This, along with further public input, will inform the next Action Plan covering 2027-2030, and then the third and final Action Plan covering 2030-34.

In this way, we will ensure the South of Scotland's Responsible Tourism Strategy never sits on a shelf gathering dust. Rather, the SSDA, VisitScotland, SOSE, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council and all relevant public bodies will work together with businesses, enterprises and communities, on a weekly basis to deliver on this ambition for the South of Scotland.

This is our commitment. Join us.

1. Inspire Visitors:

Ref.	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
Developing the Destination Position and Profile					
1.1.1	Developing our collective marketing approach with key target markets and segments to attract higher spending visitors who stay longer, with clear and consistent messaging to help build brand awareness and emotional connections	SSDA, VS	Clear annual marketing plan for the destination built around specific segments	Autumn 2024, then annually	Annual data published on marketing impact and reach achieved, with demonstrable associated increase in visitor numbers and spend
1.1.2	Ensuring more of our visitor experiences are digitally discoverable and bookable by identifying those who need support to get online	SSDA, VS	Digital discovery audit. Information, training, advice, support and mentoring	Autumn 2024, then ongoing	Almost all visitor experiences are online bookable
1.1.3	Encouraging and supporting our businesses, enterprises and communities to adopt the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding and feed into the design and delivery of marketing campaigns through the SSDA, so this becomes our collective voice	SSDA	Free SSH physical marketing collateral and digital assets available to businesses. Meetings to support local input to SSH content and campaigns.	Immediately underway and ongoing	SSH visible in every part of destination, with strong local ownership of content on SSH
1.1.4	Making the 'Scotland Starts Here' branding significantly more visible within the region.	SSDA, SBC, DGC, Transport Scotland, SOSE, VisitScotland,	A development plan created with key agencies to update and strengthen the signage landscape across the region. SSH branding on all major border crossing points from England. Physical and digital brand visibility across the destination.	First physical signs up in 2024. All major border entry points by end of 2025.	SSH visible in every part of destination, with strong local ownership of content on SSH

Developing the Destination Position and Profile					
1.1.5	Sustained long-term financial commitment to marketing the region	SOSE, SBC, DGC & VS	Five-year funding commitment from SOSE	2025-30 funding agreed by end of 2024	Clear, collective commitment to long-term planning and destination brand building
1.1.6	Creating effective digital means to track attitudes to holidaying in our region by our target markets	SSDA, VS	Annual destination awareness survey	Solution identified by autumn 2024 and reviewed annually	Able to track destination perception amongst key audiences, to understand marketing impact and design future campaigns
Develop the region as a year-round destination					
1.2.1	Undertake a baseline seasonality audit and track the progress annually	SSDA	Baseline seasonality audit	Autumn 2024, then annually	Able to track seasonality to understand progress and design effective interventions
1.2.2	Facilitating local collaboration between businesses to support the development of a standard year-round offering, in which visitors can be signposted to attractions, restaurants and accommodation which are open, whenever they visit	SSDA, VS, SBC, DGC & SOSE	Clear communication of what is open when to visitors, so SSH only promotes businesses that are open at that time	Ongoing, with an annual incremental push	Visitors feel the destination is open for businesses, whenever they visit
1.2.3	Identifying potential clusters – these could be locations, themes, activities, events – and work with businesses and communities to develop a seasonal offer, where relevant maximising our natural capital	SSDA, VS, SBC & DGC	Hubs of collaboration established, where businesses work together to develop a specific off-season product that can be marketed (e.g. dark skies etc.)	Spring 2025 for winter promotion, then ongoing as required	Six tangible, off-season products which are demonstrably bringing in new visitors Oct - March

Develop the region as a year-round destination					
1.2.4	Market the region as a year-round destination, highlighting the key offerings in each season to relevant target segments within a 2-4 hour drive	SSDA & VS	Annual marketing campaign	Annually, with major focus on bookings Oct - March	Significantly increased numbers of visitors Oct - March
Inspire the travel trade to the potential of the region					
1.3.1	Developing and delivering a programme for businesses comprising travel trade training, 1:1 bespoke support and funding opportunities for businesses to allow them to promote to the trade. This programme should include how responsible products might be developed and taken to market	SSDA & VS, SBC & DGC	Audit of travel trade ready businesses. Programme of information, support, training and mentoring.	Audit and action plan published by winter 2024, then ongoing	Doubled the number of travel trade ready businesses in the destination
1.3.2	Enhancing the travel trade portal on SSDA to take to the travel trade market	SSDA	Up to date information on the digital portal	Updated webpages by winter 2024	Scotland Starts Heretravel trade hub a one-stop shop regularly used by the travel trade
1.3.3	Representation of the region by the SSDA at travel trade events, with dedicated capacity to manage key relationships with the travel trade, organise educational visits, help develop new products, etc	SSDA	Representation of destination at travel trade expos	Increased dedicated travel trade staff capacity from 2025	Effective working relationship with 40 key travel trade partners active in the South
1.3.4	Utilise the expertise of VisitScotland in supporting tourism businesses to develop bookable experiences to new and existing markets through activity including VisitScotland Connect	VS, SSDA	Clear VisitScotland programme of work	Ongoing	40+ new bookable products developed
1.3.5	Tracking % of international visitors and number of businesses that are part of the SSDA travel trade offering	VS & SSDA	Publication of annual data, with clear targets	From 2025, then annually	Doubled percentage of international visitors 2024-2027

Leverage our credentials and designations					
1.4.1	Actively engaging with the media to showcase the best of the South of Scotland to garner further 'best in class' accolades	SSDA & VS	Media coverage, with monthly public reporting of coverage achieved. Active coordination and support to secure accolades	Ongoing, PR plan to be developed annually and reviewed regularly, with monthly reporting of coverage and reach	Three significant new accolades achieved for the destination
1.4.2	Actively using our accolades and designations in our destination marketing activity – targeting segments as relevant	SSDA & VS	Marketing and PR of accolades to convert into increased visits	Annual PR plan/ reporting from 2024	Target segments demonstrably and associate the destination with these accolades
1.4.3	Where appropriate, using our designations -such as the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and UCI bike region label - to pilot new ways of responsible business practice	GSAB, VS, SOSE, DGC & SBC/SSDA	Information, training, support and mentoring programme	From 2024, then ongoing	100+ businesses have more responsible practices
1.4.4	Securing the new Scottish Dark Sky Observatory in the Galloway Forest Park, to better leverage the economic benefits of the Galloway Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier) and establish the South of Scotland as the leading dark sky destination in the country.	SDSO, SSDA, SOSE, FLS, DGC, VS, GSAB	Securing the land; building the asset; developing an integrated visitor proposition	To be built and opened by March 2026	Scotland's national dark sky observatory open; attracting significant numbers of new visitors, especially through the winter months to extend the season

Have game-changing ambition to inspire international visitors					
1.5.1	Capitalising on the story of lowland emigration by building an iconic, totemic, national flagship visitor attraction in the South of Scotland, designed to attract higher spending international visitors	SSDA & SOSE, VS, DGC & SBC	New best-in-class national visitor attraction	Pre-feasibility study and business case completed 2024. Funding secured 2024-26. Building from 2026	Building underway, for opening in 2028
1.5.2	Build a 'stepping stone' pathway of satellite attractions and related stories (the birth of Christianity in the UK at Whithorn, Burns at Dumfries, etc) to encourage international visitors to move west-east across the region, rather than travel up to the central belt and Highlands	SSDA & VS/ DGC & SBC	International strategy composed of ten key assets which are developed to make them hubs for international visitors	Strategy published by 2025, with annual reporting	Ten assets are international-ready, with clear collective marketing
1.5.3	Embracing, and being ready for, other game-changing opportunities including the potential for a National Park and a significantly strengthened Burns tourism product through the Burns Tourism Partnership	SSDA & Burns businesses, DGC, VS, SOSE	Burns Tourism Action Plan. If a National Park is secured, dedicated marketing work	Phase 1 of Burns Tourism Action Plan complete 2024, with phases 2 and 3 agreed.	Value of Burns tourism is trebled
1.5.4	Position ourselves to maximise the chance of attracting significant and game-changing investment	SOSE, DGC & SBC, SSDA	Inward investment 'toolkit' for tourism. Unblocking prospective investments and creating investment friendly practices: connecting investment aspiration with planning/licensing reality	Toolkit launched and investment unblocking systems underway by 2025	Significant new investment streams into the destination, with investors welcomed and supported through process

2. Developing the Visitor Experience:

Ref.	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
Quality					
2.1.1	Curating existing, and developing new, training and mentoring programmes that focus on raising the quality of the visitor experience at a regional and national level	SSDA & VS, DGC, SBC & SOSE	Quality improvement plan for destination, based on visitor feedback and target markets. Training, information, mentoring and support for businesses.	Destination Quality Improvement Plan published and underway by 2025, with annual reporting	Demonstrable increase in quality in target areas, based on visitor feedback, allowing price point increase
2.1.2	Continuing to develop and promote the South of Scotland Thistle Awards, to inspire and celebrate quality and excellence	SSDA & VS	Annual South of Scotland Thistle Awards, with associated business training and support.	Ongoing/annual process	30+ key businesses have invested in quality improvements as a result of Thistles engagement
2.1.3	Developing peer-sharing systems and case studies to share learning between businesses	SSDA & VS	Sector case studies which show strategic investments in quality have transformed businesses, with transferable learning	From 2025, then ongoing	30+ key businesses have been inspired/ supported to invest in quality, and have benefited from this
2.1.4	Promoting the South of Scotland as a quality destination to our target markets	SSDA & VS	Dedicated marketing campaigns with clear messaging on quality	Annual Marketing Plan with annual impact reviews	Annual segment research showing target markets increasingly associated the South of Scotland with quality

Quality					
2.1.5	Actively supporting businesses to improve the quality of their food and drink offering, with systems established to make it easier to use local ingredients and products.	SOSE, SF&D, SSDA, VS	Practical support, training and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate use of local products and ingredients. Utilise the strength of national programmes including development of Regional Food Tourism Ambassador Programme.	Systems established by 2026	Demonstrable increase in quality of the food and drink offering across the region, with most visitor economy businesses in the SoS proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers
Growth and Development					
2.2.1	Systematically identifying key growth hubs and developing stakeholder working groups for each, with agreed outcomes and clear timescales to develop the offering, inspire new bookable products and bring in new audiences	SSDA, SOSE, DGC & SBC	Businesses brought together to develop clear action plans as to how specific areas (e.g. equestrian, literary) can be developed to bring in new visitors	Working groups established by winter 2024 - with individual timeframes set and reviewed regularly	Five major new/ significantly developed tourism offerings
2.2.2	Developing a tourism 'incubator' programme to provide a space for collaborative ideas to be developed into new quality visitor experiences	SOSE, SSDA & VS	Dedicated support for the development of major new propositions	From spring 2025	Three new visitor experiences launched and three further in development

Visitor Information					
2.3.1	Review of current visitor information usage and effectiveness, with clear development plan agreed	SSDA & VS, SOSE	Visitor Information Review based on visitor feedback	Review and action plan published 2025	Doubled number of visitors using visitor information systems with increased positive feedback
2.3.2	Encouraging and facilitating collaboration between businesses and making the product more connected, to make it easier for visitors to find and book joined-up experiences and to linger longer	SSDA & VS	New/improved systems which direct visitors from one business to the next (e.g. accommodation to local attraction), including prior to arrival	Systems established and underway by 2025	Significantly increased activity booking prior to visitors' arrival, with visitor feedback that the SoS is an easy destination to visit and enjoy
2.3.3	Ensuring every visitor economy business is listed on 'Scotland Starts Here' and is supported to keep their listing up to date	SSDA	SSH business engagement and outreach	Ongoing	Doubled number of businesses on SSH, with 10x increase in listing updates
2.3.4	Integrate 'Scotland Starts Here' with other sources of visitor information across the region	SSDA	Clear integration of all visitor information systems	Review and action plan published 2025	All sources of visitor information feel connected and integrated to the visitor - one system not many
2.3.5	Ensuring 'Scotland Starts Here' branding, with QR codes directing to the website and app, is visible across the region	SSDA	Physical signage and collateral, and digital visibility across region	Ongoing	Trebled use of SSH visitor information in region

Events					
2.4.1	Developing the festivals and events content on 'Scotland Starts Here' and using events to engage with our visitors	SSDA	New events listings systems. Dedicated marketing around signature events	Summer 2024, then ongoing	South of Scotland seen as home of festivals and events, with more events selling-out and new major events in development
2.4.2	Linking the two Local Authority Events Strategies and the new National Events Strategy directly with the relevant actions in this strategy	DGC & SBC, SSDA, VS	Combined/collective approach to connecting events and visitor economy	Ongoing	A joined-up approach to events and the visitor economy
2.4.3	Building on learning from the recent hosting of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in the region, with a view to hosting similar events of scale	VS/DGC & SBC	Key relationships with national and international organisations and collective 'Team South' approach to moving quickly when opportunities arise	Proactive approach as relevant - ongoing	At least one very significant new major event brought into the South of Scotland
2.4.4	Supporting those attending events to stay longer and spend more in the region	SSDA & event organisers, DGC & SBC, VS, SOSE	Standardised visitor information systems for those attending events	Systems agreed and underway by 2025, with annual impact reviews	All major events giving SSH information from the point of booking, with 100% increase in wider regional spend
2.4.5	Encouraging the creation of further out of season events, as part of our ambitions to develop a year-round destination	DGC & SBC, SSDA, VS & event organisers	Funding and supporting used to encourage more out of season events	From 2024, ongoing	Clear calendar of year-round events and festivals, with double the number of associated visitors Oct-March

Events					
2.4.6	Connecting existing, or encouraging new, events to create themed festivals, linked to the established strengths of the region	DGC & SBC/ VS & event organisers	Development of 'Festivals' which bring together events, to build a critical mass and encourage people to stay for more than one	Initial scoping to be done by winter 2024. Launch in 2025	At least two such 'festivals', with dedicated collaborative marketing and a demonstrable increase in bookings and length of stay
Accommodation					
2.5.1	Better understanding what visitors want and encouraging investment in new bed-stock to meet these needs and opportunities	VS, SOSE, DGC & SBC	Visitor Bedstock Review, with clear actions and priorities based on visitor feedback and market analysis	Visitor Bedstock Review completed in 2025 with annual progress reviews	Significant progress made in each of the priority bedstock areas identified by visitors
2.5.2	Improving the quality and resilience of accommodation data for the South of Scotland through encouraging and incentivising local businesses and enterprises to participate in accommodation occupancy surveys	DGC, SBC, SSDA, VS STA and other data partners	Significantly increased data sharing and data use in decision making	Plan developed by autumn 2024, implementation ongoing	Double the number of businesses actively sharing data and trebling the number <i>using</i> data to inform decision-making
2.5.3	Developing a framework on how best to facilitate temporary campsites for events, considering the impact on/benefit to communities	DGC & SBC	Clear framework/ systems for event organisers to use to temporarily increase bedstock	2025	At least three large annual events offering high-quality camping to significantly increase the number of visitors
2.5.4	Increasing the amount of travel trade ready accommodation	SSDA, VS	Audit of travel trade ready accommodation. Programme of information, support, training and mentoring.	Ongoing	Doubled the number of travel trade ready businesses

Accommodation					
2.5.5	Attracting external investment to create increased capacity and quality	SOSE/DGC & SBC	Inward investment 'toolkit' for tourism. Unblocking prospective investments and creating investment friendly practices: connecting investment aspiration with planning/licensing reality	Toolkit launched and investment unblocking systems underway by 2025	Significant new investment streams into the destination, with investors welcomed and supported through process
Infrastructure					
2.6.1	Developing a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for the region identifying key areas for improvement	DGC & SBC/ SOSE	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan, informed by visitor feedback, identifying priorities for infrastructure improvement (e.g. specific road, public transport, EV charging etc)	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan completed in 2025, with commitments from all partners and annual public reporting	Significant improvements (as evinced through visitor feedback) in each of the priorities identified in the plan
2.6.2	Applying for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to take forward key priorities	DGC & SBC, VS	Application to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	First application by 2025 then ongoing	Significant new funding secured from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

Infrastructure					
2.6.3	Fully integrating this Responsible Tourism Strategy into the Regional Economic Strategy and ensuring the visitor economy's infrastructure needs are recognised within the Regional Economic Partnership, considered by the Convention of the South of Scotland in its work, and with partner and national public agencies	SSDA/SOSE & stakeholders	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan firmly embedded within the REP, RES and COSS	From 2025, then ongoing	Tourism and the visitor economy at the heart of all high-level, long-term decision making and budget setting
2.6.4	Establishing effective logistics and distribution systems to support businesses to use local ingredients	SOSE, DGC, SBC & SSDA	Practical support and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate this.	Systems established by 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers
2.6.5	Developing more safe spaces to ride and open access to additional path networks across the South of Scotland to provide visitors of all cycling abilities safe, enjoyable and memorable experiences.	Transport Scotland, DGC, SBC	A multi-year funding commitment for our Regional Transport Partnerships and Local authorities to allow them to invest in long term projects that deliver strategic path networks and drive long term change for our citizens and visitors.	Underway by 2025	Increase in safe cycle routes
2.6.6	Establishing an EV charging network integral within the visitor economy, with charging stations at most accommodation and visitor attractions	DGC & SBC, SOSE, SSDA	Clear strategic approach, with information, support and funding to assist businesses to install EV charging for visitors, with a clear integrated system which is user friendly (i.e. not competing networks)	Initial plan to be developed by Spring 2025, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Most accommodation and visitor attractions to offer EV charging at appropriate speeds

Infrastructure					
2.6.7	Identifying locations where the provision of toilet facilities and bins can be improved and work with partners and communities to find locally-appropriate solutions	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Support, sharing, representation and funding to ensure toilets remain open.	Working groups established from summer 2024, with action plans agreed by spring 2025	15 existing or new public toilets have a secure and sustainable future
Inward Investment					
2.7.1	Identifying key strategic opportunities for investment and working together to offer the right package of business support to secure appropriate investment	SOSE, DGC & SBC	Business support	Ongoing as relevant	Increased inward investment directly attributable to business support
2.7.2	Establish sustained, open communication channels which allow us to listen to businesses and prospective investors, so we understand and can address potential blockers and impediments to investments	SOSE/DGC & SBC	Better public-private sector working to find solutions to systemic investment blockers	Channels established autumn 2024, annual reporting from 2025 on tangible actions taken	SoS seen as an investment-friendly region, resulting in increased investments

Inward Investment					
2.7.3	Establish integrated efficient systems with the two local authorities to ensure that significant prospective investments are well supported through planning and licensing, in an effective and timely way	SSDA, DGC & SBC	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
2.7.4	Maximising current tourism investment pipeline opportunities including those linked to the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Edinburgh and South-east Scotland City Regional – Regional Prosperity Framework and Levelling Up funding to develop the visitor experience. This includes a partnership approach to the following projects - Destination Tweed/Tweed Trail, FLS 7 Stanes Masterplans and Stranraer Harbour marine tourism plans.	SOSE, DGC, SBC, VS & SSDA , Destination Tweed/FLS	Securing further investment and ensuring current investments deliver for the visitor economy	Ongoing as relevant	Significant further investment attracted

3. Support Businesses:

Ref	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
Support and collaboration					
3.1.1	Having a strong, effective and well-supported destination management and marketing organisation which functions as an inclusive network representing and supporting all of the visitor economy	SSDA/SOSE, DGC & SBC	South of Scotland Destination Alliance as a business-led network is supported through to 2030	Ongoing, but funding needs to be secured longer term	Continuity in activity, promotion, support to industry
3.1.2	Building mutual understanding between the private and public sector, with informed decision-making, unblocking investment pipelines by having direct channels to resolve issues in planning and licensing, and easing bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring that regulation is proportionate and effective	SSDA, DGC & SBC	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
3.1.3	Facilitating collaboration, sharing and peer learning between organisations, such that each individual business isn't having to reinvent solutions to the same challenges, and success breeds success	SSDA, SOSE & VS	Local meetings across the South of Scotland to support sharing and collaboration	Ongoing, with most meetings Oct - Feb	Every business in the SoS visitor economy a part of at least one local collaboration
3.1.4	Developing a clear and coordinated programme of needs-led business support from all organisations (SSDA, VS, SDS, Business Gateway, SOSE, LAs, Scotland Food & Drink, etc), so businesses know exactly what support is available where and are able to easily tap into it	SOSE, SSDA, DGC & SBC	Clear, coordinated and collaborative B2B front-end, where businesses can easily see what support they can access	Programme co-ordinated by Spring 2025, then reviewed annually/as support evolves	Every business in the SoS visitor economy knows what support is available and how to access it
3.1.5	Developing a locally-led approach to destination development by regularly bringing together businesses and communities to understand, and respond to, local priorities and to allow towns to showcase their unique identities	SSDA	Local coordination and support meetings every six months in all 14 areas of the SoS	Underway, and ongoing	All 14 areas of the SoS have local development plans for tourism in their local area

Representation					
3.2.1	Having bi-annual Locally Led Destination Development meetings in every part of the region, specifically to listen to, represent and act on the experience of local businesses and communities	SSDA	Businesses supported to share their priorities	Continuing every six months, with meetings in all 14 areas in Oct and Feb	Business concerns are clearly articulated and swiftly acted on
3.2.2	Developing specific new mechanisms for businesses to share information about how/where prospective new investments are being delayed or deterred by planning or licensing, with a quarterly review of this data by the SSDA and Council Leaders to develop practical solutions	SSDA, DGC & SBC	Centralised information about where prospective investments are getting stuck/delayed, with quarterly reviews at senior level and annual public reporting	Systems in place - Autumn 2024	Strong public and private confidence that planning and licensing is efficient and effective
3.2.3	Having bi-annual meetings between the SSDA and the senior leadership of the two councils, SOSE and VisitScotland, to share views heard from businesses and communities	DGC, SBC, SSDA, SOSE & VS	Meetings taking place after the 14 LLDD local meetings, to share and discuss views of business	Dec and March each year, starting in 2024	Senior leadership of the Council is well-briefed on issues facing the industry
3.2.4	Bi-annually reporting back on the views and priorities communicated by business and communities, and what action has been taken	SSDA	Publication of key concerns raised by businesses across the SoS and actions taken to mitigate	Continuing, every six months, in Dec and March	Business concerns are clearly articulated and swiftly acted on
3.2.5	Having the SSDA and VisitScotland actively represented on the Regional Economic Partnership	SSDA, VS & REP	Tourism at the centre of the Regional Economic Strategy	5 meetings a year	Visitor Economy at the heart of South of Scotland decision-making

Workforce development					
3.3.1	Developing a workforce skills plan for the South of Scotland's visitor economy	SOSE, SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, Colleges, SDS, Glasgow University	Identify key gaps and priorities, and specific actions which can address these	Winter 2025, then reviewed annually	Stronger workforce, better visitor experience
3.3.2	Advocating for careers in tourism and hospitality, building respect and recognition	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW	Positive representation of the visitor economy to prospective future workforce	Ongoing	Young people inspired and supported to enter tourism
3.3.3	Working closely with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders to have a clear and compelling package of services to support workforce development	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW, Colleges, SDS	New/improved services developed and clearly communicated through schools, colleges etc	Winter 2025 for initial package, then reviewed annually	Significant increase in young people accessing relevant training in key areas of skill gaps
3.3.4	Looking for practical solutions to the specific shortage of trained chefs in the region	SOSE, Colleges, SSDA, DYW, SDS	Most ideally, a chef school within the region	Plan agreed in 2024, developed in 2025.	Increase in the number of qualified chefs working in the region as a result of new/improved training
3.3.5	Supporting the development of relevant qualifications and pathways, to encourage our young people to choose it as a career as they leave school	SOSE, Colleges, DYW, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Outreach programme to young people in the region, linked to relevant training	Spring 2025, then ongoing and reviewed annually	More young people proud to be entering into a career in hospitality and tourism
3.3.6	Working directly with the two colleges in the South of Scotland to provide appropriate practical training, which is linked to industry and embedded in the South of Scotland, such that young people can train, work and stay in the region	SOSE, Colleges, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Specific new/improved practical training courses in areas of current skill gaps	Development in 2024-25. Live by 2026	Enhanced employment opportunities, improved community wellbeing
3.3.7	Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to adopt a Fair Work approach to their staffing policies to ensure that the South of Scotland is a Fair Work destination	SOSE, SSDA	Practical training, information, advice, support and representation	Initial plan developed by Autumn 2024, then ongoing	More Fair Work businesses

Workforce development					
3.3.8	Establishing the South of Scotland as a year-round destination, with year-round employment	SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, SOSE	Supporting businesses to stay open more of the year/week, including through marketing and local collaboration	Ongoing	More businesses open week-round and year-round, offering quality, reliable employment
Data Insights Sharing					
3.4.1	Consulting business to understand their data needs and what insights would inform successful decision-making	SSDA, VS, SOSE	Consultation	Autumn 2024, ongoing	Clear understanding of what data is actually needed by businesses
3.4.2	Developing a regional tourism barometer that collects key data on visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction and destination awareness – to be publicly shared quarterly	SSDA, VS, DGC & SBC	Collection, collation and dissemination of data insights	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Clear, publicly available, easy to use, information identifying key trends businesses can make decisions against
3.4.3	Creating a central data hub for businesses to access the latest data from relevant public sector/industry sources with easy to digest ‘headlines’	SSDA, VS, SOSE, DGC & SBC	Digital data insights hub	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Clear, publicly available, easy to use, information identifying key trends businesses can make decisions against
3.4.4	Actively supporting businesses to interpret, understand and use key data insights	SSDA & VS	Training, webinars, newsletters etc	Live by end of 2024, ongoing with quarterly reporting	Businesses able to quickly and easily make good decisions informed by relevant data

4. Be Responsible:

Ref	Actions	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
Nature/Natural Capital					
4.1.1	Working collaboratively with regional partners to deliver the Natural Capital aspirations of the Regional Economic Partnership and the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme	SOSE, NatureScot, SSDA, DGC, SBC	Clear delivery programme for Natural Capital	Developed 2024/25, delivered from 2025	Measurable improvements in the South of Scotland's natural capital as a result of this work, with this woven into the positive story we tell visitors about the south as a responsible destination
4.1.2	Measuring customer perception of access and seeking feedback on improvements to target future spend appropriately	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Survey / social media data scrape to understand visitor perceptions and priorities	Measurements in place for Summer 2025, then re-visited every 3 years	Better understanding of visitor perceptions and experiences
4.1.3	Working collectively to develop and support our paths network, recognising the 'hero' routes and locations and agreeing priority areas for improvement	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Integrated paths management across the SoS, with commitments to investment priorities and user feedback	Initial plan developed by winter 2024/25, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Demonstrably improved path network and visitor experience in priority areas

Nature/Natural Capital					
4.1.4	Investing in sustainable marine and coastal tourism	SOSE, SSDA, DGC & SBC	Clear framework establishing which articulates the commercial potential in marine and coastal tourism and agrees investment priorities	Consultations through 2024/25, framework live by 2025 and reported on annually	Increased investment in marine and coastal tourism, in strategic and targeted ways, which demonstrably increase visitor spend
4.1.5	Securing permanent funding to resource officers to work with funding bodies and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	DGC & SBC	Funding secured	Autumn 2025 - tied into RTIF application timings	Adequate human capacity
4.1.6	Working with communities and partner agencies to actively monitor the environmental impact of visitors in key areas and adjust practises as required	DGC & SBC, SSDA & SOSE	Communities able to raise concerns about the impact of tourism, with annual reporting linked to rapid decision-making to mitigate	Monitoring framework to be developed by winter 2024/25, and then reported against annually	As we grow tourism, we are confident we have effective safeguards to ensure this is not at the cost of the environment
Net Zero					
4.2.1	Signing up to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.	SSDA	A formal signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, with appropriate associated actions	Spring 2025	South of Scotland a part of globally-recognised good practice on climate action
4.2.2	Creating EV charging points at accommodation and visitor attractions to allow visitors to charge their vehicles.	DGC & SBC, SOSE, SSDA	Clear strategic approach, with information, support and funding to assist businesses to install EV charging for visitors, with a clear integrated system which is user friendly (i.e. not competing networks)	Initial plan to be developed by Spring 2025, then ongoing as relevant to timings in plan	Most accommodation and visitor attractions to offer EV charging at appropriate speeds

Net Zero					
4.2.3	Influencing Scottish Power to provide the necessary power supply required at accommodation and attractions for EV charging.	SOSE, DGC, SBC &SSDA	Listening to difficulties businesses have faced, clearly articulating these to Scottish Power with specific asks which are publicly reported on	Immediately, then ongoing	Most accommodation and visitor attractions have sufficient power access for EV charging at appropriate speeds
4.2.4	Encouraging and supporting EV hire at public transport hubs	DGC & SBC/ relevant transport operators	EV hire businesses able to invest and establish a clear offering	Ongoing	Visitors able to hire an EV from each of the major transport hubs in the South of Scotland
4.2.5	Providing a framework to support and encourage tourism businesses on a journey to Net Zero by utilising the expertise of SSDA, SOSE, VisitScotland, FLS, NatureScot, the local authorities, and the Galloway and South Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere	SOSE, VS, SSDA, GSAB, DGC, SBC	Training, webinars, information, practical support, mentoring, case studies, etc to help businesses on their net zero journey	Winter 2024, then ongoing and reviewed regularly	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS taking tangible actions against clear net zero plans
4.2.6	Building a destination brand which has Net Zero proudly at its heart	SSDA, VS, SOSE	Clear marketing of the SoS as a Net Zero destination	Part of initial brand review - summer 2024, then reviewed as required	A more responsible destination

Community-led Tourism					
4.3.1	Having a locally-led approach to destination development, which supports the delivery of locally agreed Place Plans and recognises our communities as delivery partners	SSDA, DGC & SBC	Bi-annual local meetings across all of the SoS, in which local businesses/ groups can feed into planning	Underway. Local meetings every six months	Strong local ownership and engagement in all matters which affect tourism locally
4.3.2	Supporting the role of the third sector and social enterprises within the visitor economy and embedding them in product development and promotional activity	SSDA, TSI, SCOTO, GSAB	Third sector able to take an active part in Locally Led Destination Development work	Initial plan developed by summer 2024, then ongoing	Stronger links and joint working between the public, private and third sector
4.3.3	Focusing on high-value tourism, rather than high volume	SSDA, VS	Having a clear cost-benefit-analysis approach to segmentation: targeting visitors who contribute the most and have the least negative impact	Underway, ongoing	Improved community wellbeing, and greater economic benefit
4.3.4	Supporting community asset transfer initiatives which relate to a visitor proposition, to access routes to markets when ready	SOSE, SSDA, DGC, SBC, VS, SCOTO	Community groups able to own and run key local assets	Underway, ongoing	Increased community ownership of key local assets
4.3.5	Establishing an initiative to look into the creation and adoption of a circular economy, to pursue sustainability and increase wealth for communities	SOSE, DGC & SBC, SCOTO	Tangible actions agreed and underway, to advance the circular economy	Develop the initiative by Spring 2025, then review annually	Demonstrable improvements in community wealth and sustainability
4.3.6	Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to use locally sourced and seasonal products to support and create local jobs and enhance authenticity for the visitor	SOSE, DGC, SBC & SSDA	Practical support and information, and the development of specific logistics and distribution systems to facilitate this.	Systems established by 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are proudly using local suppliers and communicating this to customers

Community-led Tourism					
4.3.7	Embedding the principles of community benefit in new tourism investments	SOSE, DGC & SBC, SCOTO	Public investments in the third sector should include clear community benefit	Ongoing	Demonstrably increased community benefit
4.3.8	Working with communities and the third sector to develop visitor experiences around unique elements of regional culture and heritage, including Roman and Iron Age, early Christianity, textile heritage and literary and language including Gaelic and Scots. This will include the agreed partnership approach across the region to the development of Iron Age and Roman Heritage and the potential for participatory archaeological digs.	SOSE, SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC & HES	Clear messaging in destination marketing, linked to product development	Ongoing, but plans for key themes to be developed by Spring 2025	Increased visitors coming to the South of Scotland for this cultural heritage
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism					
4.4.1	Undertaking an inclusivity and accessibility audit of the destination, to identify key priority areas and tangible actions which we will report against annually	SSDA, DGC, SBC & key stakeholders as relevant	Clear plan for how we will improve access and inclusion	Undertake the audit by Spring 2025, then review annually	Demonstrably improved access and inclusion, from visitor feedback
4.4.2	Ensuring that accessible and inclusive tourism is included in the support and training made available to our businesses on customer service, information provision and inclusive design	SSDA, VS & key stakeholders as relevant	Training, support, advice and information	Spring 2025, then ongoing as required	Significant increase in the number of businesses taking tangible actions to increase access and inclusion
4.4.3	Supporting our event organisers to ensure their events are accessible	DGC, SBC	Training, support, advice, information and oversight	Spring 2025, then ongoing as required	All major events in the South of Scotland are inclusive and accessible

Visitor management					
4.5.1	Raising awareness of responsible practices among visitors	SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC	Physical signage and digital information available across the SoS	Priorities established by end of 2024, with annual reporting against these	Most visitors have seen, and been influenced by, information about responsible practices
4.5.2	Encouraging businesses and enterprises to communicate these practices directly to their customers	SSDA, VS	Clear, easy to use and freely available visitor information campaign assets are available for businesses to use	Priorities established by end of 2024, with assets available by spring 2025	Most visitor economy businesses in the SoS are helping disseminate information about responsible visitor practices
4.5.3	Working with businesses and communities at a local level to understand the impact of tourism and be ready to work with the appropriate council if active mitigations are required	DGC & SBC, SSDA & SOSE	Communities able to raise concerns about the impact of tourism, with annual reporting linked to rapid decision-making to mitigate	Monitoring framework to be developed by winter 2024/25, and then reported against annually	As we grow tourism, we are confident we have effective safeguards to ensure this is not at the cost of the environment
4.5.4	Using the 'Scotland Starts Here' app and other digital tools, to track visitor movements across the South of Scotland and steer visitors away from certain areas, where required	SSDA	Regular tracking of visitor movements using the SSH app and other tools	Winter 2024, then ongoing as required	Improved community wellbeing, sustainable tourism and enhanced visitor experiences

Motorhome visitor experience					
4.6.1	Creating a region-wide motorhome experience through the development of a motorhome policy framework that covers expectations of campervan users, waste management (black, grey and litter) and details on locations where users can/cannot park	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Clear policy framework for all the South of Scotland	Winter 2024 and reviewed annually	Standardised visitor experience, with associated spend in region and decreased negative impacts
4.6.2	Creating a network of free/low-cost black/grey waste disposal on local authority properties and via the private sector	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Black/grey waste disposal systems in place, with monitoring	Live by 2025	Improved campervan facilities and community wellbeing
4.6.3	Creating a network of overnight parking options provided by the local authorities and the private sector for which motorhome users should be expected to pay appropriate charges, and are encouraged to spend at existing local businesses	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Parking established, carefully managed and clearly advertised	Spring 2025 and ongoing as required	Improved campervan facilities and community wellbeing
4.6.4	Actively manage our motorhome offering to maximise spend in region	DGC & SBC, SSDA	Regular feedback from businesses to understand, and maximise, local spend	Ongoing and review annually	Demonstrable feedback from local businesses and communities that motorhomes are actively contributing