



# Operating Plan

2025/26



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# Foreword

As South of Scotland Enterprise celebrates its 5th birthday as Scotland's newest enterprise agency, we launch our 2025/26 Operating Plan at what is a transformational time for our region. Our Plan sets out the actions and activity South of Scotland Enterprise will take, directly and collaboratively with partners, to continue to make a real and lasting difference for the South of Scotland, and beyond.

We take the extraordinary momentum we have built up over the last five years into our sixth year. This is testament to our determined focus on being a catalyst to spark progress and drive change that delivers impact and opportunity for our region.

Looking ahead, our region has never seen as many significant opportunities combining to drive unprecedented levels of interest in the South of Scotland. It is no longer a secret that the South of Scotland is a wonderful place to live, work, learn, invest, start-up or do business.

This is demonstrated by the South now confirmed as Scotland's Natural Capital Innovation Zone (NCIZ) and our pioneering work on behalf of the Scottish Government in piloting new approaches to encouraging, enabling and empowering more female entrepreneurs and others from underrepresented groups.

We all continue to work hard to add further opportunities, creating new markets and driving investment which aligns with the vision for a fairer, greener and flourishing South of Scotland. We also remain focussed on our SMEs and enterprising

communities, supporting them to grow, and be ready to respond to those significant and transformative opportunities that lie ahead.

Underpinning all of this is our focus on continuing to drive progress, in innovation, productivity and profitability and whilst working towards Fair Work and the Just Transition to Net Zero to create a Wellbeing Economy, in turn strengthening the resilience of and enabling communities across our region to thrive.

The world in which all of us operate is constantly changing – and this means all of us working together must adapt and change too. We are committed to ensuring that with and in response to listening to you all, we are adaptive, forward thinking, innovative and responsive to the needs of the South of Scotland.

We hope that by leading through example, in being bold for ourselves and readily adapting to changing circumstances, we will ensure that the South of Scotland maximises the benefits, of the new, significant and transformative opportunities that await us all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russel Griggs'.

**Professor Russel Griggs OBE**  
Chair, South of Scotland Enterprise



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Morrison-Ross'.

**Jane Morrison-Ross**  
Chief Executive, South of Scotland Enterprise

# Who We Are

We - South of Scotland Enterprise or SOSE for short - are Scotland's newest economic development agency, established by the South of Scotland Enterprise Act (2019) and came into being on 1 April 2020 to meet the need for investment and growth in the South of Scotland.

Covering Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, we support people, communities and enterprises in our region to thrive, grow and fulfil their potential. We provide a single point of access and expertise for those wanting to invest, locate and do business in the South of Scotland. With our focus on people, planet and place, we drive activity that will deliver the rural powerhouse we believe the region can be.

We are here to be **bold and ambitious, to take risks and to do things differently.**



**Our VISION** is to create Success, increase Opportunity, lead a Sustainable and Just Transition to Net Zero and Advance Equality, building on our AIMS, as set out in legislation, to further the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland and to improve the amenity and environment of the region.

Following the publication of our **Five-Year Plan** in April 2023, our current focus remains grouped around six key themes - **our Six As** - that will make a real and lasting difference for the region, and which have been shaped by extensive engagement with those who live, work, are based and/or are active across the South.

Our focus on the Six As acts to ensure that we deliver our vision and aims whilst also playing our part to help realise the wider, collective vision for a **Greener, Fairer and Flourishing South of Scotland by 2031**. It also ensures that in doing so, we are maximising our contribution to national ambitions too and the Scottish Government's vision for a **Wellbeing Economy** in which everyone in Scotland benefits from prosperity.

“ We are...  
**FOR** the South,  
**BY** the South and  
**IN** the South. ”


# The South of Scotland - Our Region

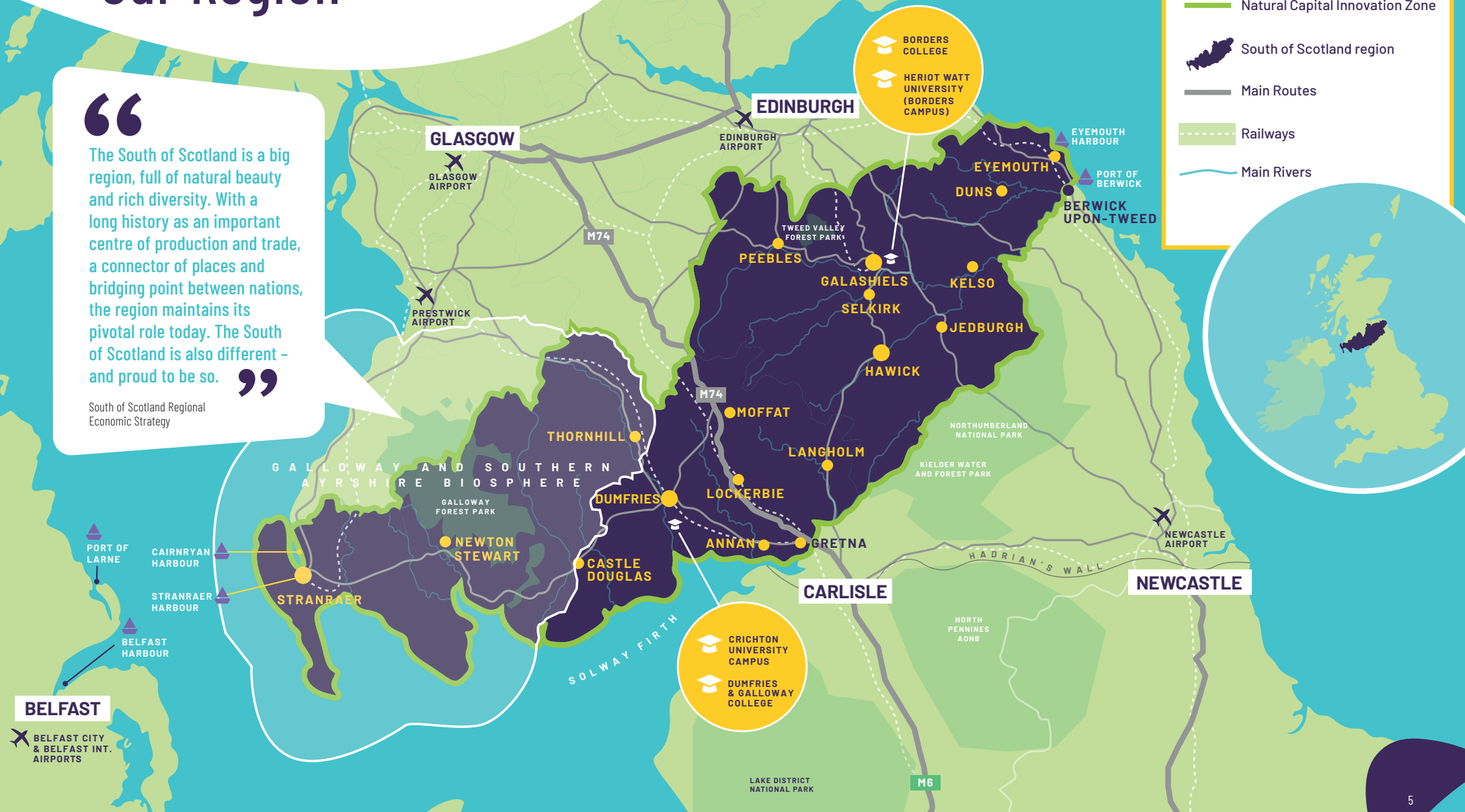
“  
 The South of Scotland is a big region, full of natural beauty and rich diversity. With a long history as an important centre of production and trade, a connector of places and bridging point between nations, the region maintains its pivotal role today. The South of Scotland is also different - and proud to be so. ”

South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy



## KEY

-  Natural Capital Innovation Zone
-  South of Scotland region
-  Main Routes
-  Railways
-  Main Rivers



**BELFAST**  
 BELFAST CITY & BELFAST INT. AIRPORTS

# Our Five-Year Plan and Strategic Context

We launched our Five-Year Plan – our first strategic plan – in April 2023. It remains our key guiding document, making clear where we will focus our efforts through to 2028.

Specifically, it identifies six areas of strategic focus – **our six As** – where we will look to drive change and make a real and lasting difference for our people, places and the planet.

It also sets out how we will work to deliver for the South, ensuring that our values – **being Inclusive, Responsible, Bold and Striving** – continue to be at the heart of all we do and that we will ‘listen first and do second’.

It commits us to keep bringing people together, listening to them, and working with them to realise the great potential we all know the South of Scotland has, and helping us all to achieve more and to amplify our distinctive regional voice.

For each year of our Five-Year Plan, we committed to producing and publishing an annual Operating Plan. These Operating Plans set out our actions and activity to drive progress against our areas of strategic focus. This Operating Plan responds to this commitment and covers the period from 1 April 2025 through to 31 March 2026.

Each year we also publish a separate Annual Report, which details the impacts of our work and performance, alongside our audited accounts.



**Our Five-Year Plan is part of a collective effort to realise the vision for a Green, Fair and Flourishing South of Scotland set out in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), and to support the creation of a wellbeing economy delivering the ambition in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) to create prosperity for everyone in Scotland.**

Both the RES and NSET were key influences on our Five-Year Plan, with related delivery plans and subsequent more detailed strategies – including Scotland’s Green Industrial Strategy and separate Innovation Strategy – also shaping some of our operational focus. This reflects that **we continue to be directly involved in supporting the delivery of many of the recently refreshed actions associated with both the RES and National Strategies** – working collaboratively with our partners to do so. We are also alive to new opportunities emerging through the developing UK Industrial Strategy, and we will continue to work in the best interests of our region and Scotland more widely to capitalise on these.

At the heart of a sharpened focus from a regional perspective, is our ongoing work to address the **three main challenges – housing, transport and skills.**

- **Collaborate to create more homes – and more choice of homes** – where they are needed in the South of Scotland
- Investigate opportunities to **enhance transport connectivity and sustainability** in the South of Scotland
- Develop proposals to meet our **regional green skills opportunities and needs**, with a particular focus on construction skills and pathways

These were arrived at by members of the Regional Economic Partnership (REP) because progress against each of these three enablers is key to unlocking progress on wider ambitions. There is also a strong focus on land use, equally a cross-cutting enabler, reflecting the REP’s oversight of the Regional Land Use Framework (Scotland’s first) and Partnership (RLUP) as well as the recent and globally significant designation of the entire region as Scotland’s Natural Capital Innovation Zone.

**As SOSE, we have been working collaboratively with partners to advance work for each of these key areas of focus, providing leadership and capacity to help drive progress including the development of more detailed specific action plans to guide collaborative efforts.**



# Our Key Activities Across 2025/26

Our Five-Year Plan provides a framework that guides our activity and resources around our six areas of strategic focus. Our Operating Plan sets out our priority activities for the year ahead under each of those six areas. Many of our planned activities contribute to more than one of our areas of strategic focus and as such it is important that the pages which follow are read as a whole as opposed to in isolation.

We also set out a range of **key enabling activities** that will underpin all that we do. This includes delivering on the commitments in our values and mission to work in partnership, lead the way, think differently and continue to speak with and for people across the South of Scotland. We will also continue to value, support and develop our own staff and ways of working so we continue to bring the best of our expertise, experience and enthusiasm to our priorities and our mission.

The importance of **'Place' is at the heart of all that we do**. This means working collectively across the South - together as an organisation, and with our clients and partners to add value and complement other Place activity, strengthening the difference we can make for settlements and localities across the region and making sure that what we are working on builds on and aligns with existing economic development activity.

Overview of  
our key enabling  
activities that  
underpin all that  
we do.





## Accelerating Net Zero and Nature-Positive Solutions

- Leading the Just Transition to Net Zero and a Nature-Positive region
- Innovating for a clean energy transition and promoting nature-based solutions
- Establishing regenerative and resilient approaches to land and marine assets
- Leveraging the natural capital potential of the region

### Our key activity across 2025-26

#### As SOSE...

- Continue to offer **bespoke, tailored advice and signposting** to any enterprise seeking to accelerate their **transition to Net Zero and a Nature-Positive future**, including **climate and energy resilience**.
- Deliver further rounds of our **Net Zero Accelerator Fund** and **Natural Capital Innovation Fund** to accelerate delivery of solutions that will **lead the way in achieving the Just Transition to Net Zero and a Nature-Positive future** at pace and scale.
- Realise the potential from the designation of the region as Scotland's **Natural Capital Innovation Zone** to leverage the South's unique combined qualities to **attract transformative investment in nature-based solutions**, by shaping specific opportunities for new projects/investment and influencing, engaging and convening stakeholders and partners to deliver.
- Deliver the **SoS Space Growth Strategy**, leveraging **earth observation data** for natural capital management and entrepreneurial activity.
- Develop a **Heat Network Prospectus** and use it to **attract infrastructure investment** and increase the region's participation in appropriate opportunities.
- Develop and deliver an **Agriculture Transition Plan** – covering **Food and Drink and agricultural supply chains** too – that articulates priorities and actions for influencing and investment, driving a resilient and Net Zero future.
- Develop a **sustainability framework** for SOSE, **embedding sustainability in everything we do** and ensuring that we are pursuing the opportunities that will maximise impact for prosperity, people and planet.
- Produce and manage delivery of our own **Net Zero Action Plan** to achieve operational Net Zero by 2038, and develop our approach to becoming a **climate resilient organisation**.
- Roll out **internal staff training / awareness raising on Natural Capital**.

#### In Collaboration...

- **Coordinate Net Zero Plans** across public sector partners to drive **regional decarbonisation**.
- Develop and deliver a **whole-system Energy Transition Plan**, articulating the South's energy mission and priorities for influencing and investment – helping embed and drive new market opportunities and attracting investment that will deliver a Just Transition and transformative benefits.
- Actively support delivery of the **Borderlands Energy Investment Programme** and related Net Zero themed Borderlands projects.
- Establish a **South of Scotland Onshore Wind Developers Forum** to strengthen collective collaboration, maximising the benefits for the region afforded by the transition to Net Zero.
- Continue to drive delivery of key **place-based Net Zero and Nature-Positive opportunities** – including **Chapelcross Green Energy Hub, Eyemouth Port Masterplan** and **Stranraer** – working to identify and realise further place-based cluster opportunities.
- Deliver the **Borderlands Regional Investment** and **Natural Capital Hub for Transition (BRICHT) pilot**.
- Work with Scottish Wildlife Trust to develop and launch a **new and pioneering innovation challenge** across the South of Scotland as a catalyst to accelerate delivery of nature-positive solutions.
- Facilitate effective land use decision-making through the **Regional Land Use Partnership and Framework**.
- Strengthen the impact of our partnership with **Zero Waste Scotland** in embedding circular economy principles across the region and contributing to NCIZ objectives.
- Deliver capability building and support for **farm resilience**, through delivery of the **Small Producer Pilot, a Rural Innovation Programme, and Introducing Regenerative Agriculture**.
- Work with **Smart Rural** to support regional farmers with **value creation** through **better data ownership, access and management**.
- Develop and deliver the **River Nith Source to Sea Catchment project** with Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and partners.
- **Respond** to the outcome of the consultation to the **Galloway National Park proposal**.

#### Our Primary Performance Measures

- **Value of investment in Net Zero opportunities; Value of investment in Natural Capital Opportunities; Estimated Co2 emissions reductions by clients and projects.**



## CASE STUDY

# Heat Brokerage Events

In supporting the establishment of a **regional net-zero and clean heat supply chain**, SOSE worked in partnership with **HeatSource** to deliver two **heat decarbonisation brokerage events** – attracting over 150 attendees in total. The goal of the events was to bring people together to share best practice, build connections with other organisations doing similar things in the region, and stimulate local supply chains.

The events provided a platform that enabled active and collaborative discussions between those seeking to decarbonise buildings and those offering technical and place-based solutions, with a view to these discussions leading to action on the ground. The events brought key players across the sector together, in particular those that are operating in the South of Scotland.

In a regional setting, the events provided the likes of Registered Social Landlords, public sector, enterprising communities and private estates an opportunity to set out their aspirations, plans and programmes of work to transition to clean heat. Equally, through a series of burst talks, those offering technical and place-based solutions – many of them based in the South of Scotland – were able to share what they can provide and enable.

As a result of these two events, **new partnerships for the local supply chain have been established** and **new projects initiated**. The outcomes will also help to inform our upcoming **South of Scotland heat network prospectus**, whilst it also identified other areas where more could be done to support heat decarbonisation in the South.



## Advocating for Fair Work and Equality

- Championing Fair Work and security of work and pay
- Advancing opportunity and inclusion
- Supporting lifelong learning
- Strengthening the resilience and scope of the Third Sector

### Our key activity across 2025-26

#### As SOSE...

- Drive the uptake of **fair working practices, equality of opportunity and inclusion**, advocating across all that we do and exerting our influence through client interactions and grant funding levers.
- Promote **enhanced client case studies on Fair Work and inclusive working practices**, helping to inspire others and share learning.
- **Further strengthen our efforts to support more women, young people and others from under-represented groups** to kick start and realise their business ideas, building on our success in delivering dedicated coaching and the Pathways Pre-Start pilot.
- Further develop and deliver long-term support to encourage and assist growth of **inclusive and democratic business models, which embrace fair working practices**.
- Continue to develop our **Youth Advisory Forum** – including adding to our newly created team in the Scottish Borders – ensuring that the **voice of young people meaningfully influences key decisions** affecting the South of Scotland's future economy.
- Invest in the development of our **Youth Advisory Forum** Members, offering training and mentoring to help create a pool of **'Board-Ready' individuals**, well-placed to support more inclusive decision making across the region.
- Continue to work towards **Level 3 Disability Confident Accreditation**, and the **Neurodiversity Employers Index Gold standard**, leading by example and championing the need for and benefits of changing the narrative around disability and neurodivergence.
- Share our learning through **active participation in relevant equality focussed national and regional forums**, continuing to inform future national strategy and policy development and ensuring the needs of the South are adequately reflected.

#### In Collaboration...

- Deliver the shared ambitions and actions of **No One Left Behind** – focussed on helping people of all ages who face the greatest barriers to progress towards, into and to sustain work – through **active participation in the region's two Local Employability Partnerships** and greater collaboration with Scottish Government.
- Build on research undertaken by **Sleeping Giants**, to develop actions focussed on **reducing barriers to recruitment, retention and progression for neurodivergent adults**, as well as supporting employers to explore different ways of working and **create neuro-affirming workplaces**.
- Support the implementation of local **Child Poverty Action Plans**, maximising opportunities to directly eradicate poverty through economic growth and transformation.
- Aid more locally based social and community enterprises to **diversify and develop**, particularly in response to emerging **local labour market needs**.
- Seek to **influence a future approach to regional skills planning** that delivers for the South of Scotland and supports reform of the national skills landscape.
- Develop proposals to meet our **regional green skills opportunities and needs**, with a particular focus on construction and engineering skills and pathways.
- Deliver the strategic priorities of the **Crichton Campus Leadership Group**, including helping to facilitate the delivery of student and key worker accommodation.
- Take forward the learning from the **Scottish Funding Council's Regional Tertiary Pathfinder** programmes in the South of Scotland, to further **strengthen tertiary education collaboration and learning pathways**.
- Develop a strategy to **support Third Sector organisations** to pivot and adapt to become more resilient and financially sustainable.
- Continue to support **TSI D&G** in leading on exploring **innovative approaches to community transport** delivery and partnerships.
- Afford partners access to our now well-established **Youth Advisory Forum** to help shape and influence key wider regional projects and initiatives.

#### Our Primary Performance Measures

- **Number of real Living Wage jobs supported** (created, safeguarded or transitioned).



## CASE STUDY

# 'Hit the Ground Running'

The Creative Industries are a growing and important part of the regional economy in the South of Scotland, with many emerging opportunities including in the Screen Sector. However, there can often be limited opportunities for young people in particular to get the skills they need to embrace such opportunities.

To help address this challenge, SOSE supported **Hit the Ground Running**, an intensive 2-day training course for entry level roles in scripted film and television productions.

The training was delivered by **BECTU Vision** in Dumfries with attendees from across the South of Scotland and followed on from free to attend **Behind the Scenes in Film and Television** information evenings held in Dumfries, Hawick and online. These introductory sessions were designed to build interest by providing an overview of the film and television landscape in Scotland and insight into the range of roles involved in screen content production.

The information evenings were followed by the 2-day training course, focusing on working in the Production, Assistant Director and Locations Departments on scripted film and television productions. The course covered what's involved in "Runner" roles and how to do them well. Industry practitioners delivered workshops on how to read production paperwork and understanding industry lingo, a guide to freelance working, CV advice and input from a range of industry professionals, which **equipped participants with the knowledge, tools and contacts to help with their next steps.**

The training was supported by Screen Scotland – BFI Skills Cluster Activity, SOSE, BBC and Scottish Union Learning in partnership with BECTU.



## Activating & Empowering Enterprising Communities

- Boosting community capacity and confidence
- Supporting place focused community-led regeneration and development
- Embedding Community Wealth Building (CWB) principles
- Encouraging ambition and entrepreneurial thinking

### Our key activity across 2025-26

#### As SOSE...

- Continue to **deliver bespoke, tailored advice and signposting to strengthen the foundations and governance of social and community enterprises** to enable ambitious, sustainable enterprise growth including asset acquisition and development.
  - Inspire and support **social and community entrepreneurs** as an integral part of our wider pre-start and founder support offer.
- Aid social and community enterprises to **identify and maximise opportunities which arise from inward investment opportunities**, building sustainable business opportunities linked to place and sectoral development.
- Continue to deliver our **Communities Ambition Fund**, making an additional c.£0.5m available as a catalyst to help unlock potential in ambitious communities.
- Raise **enhanced awareness of our support and impact** for social and community enterprises, including facilitating peer to peer learning.
- **Embed the principles of Community Wealth Building** – as an anchor organisation within the South – in our own organisational practices.

#### In Collaboration...

- Support the development and implementation of **Borderlands Place and Town Investment Plans** for Borderlands Priority Places.
- Support the development of **social and community projects emerging from Local Place Plans**, which support Enterprising Communities to do more in their local areas.
- Support the **investment readiness** of community led, place-based, transformational projects.
- Sustain a **culture of collaboration and partnership through place-based support structures** to develop and deliver a programme of support that addresses the needs of enterprising communities including gaps in skills and knowledge.
- Develop information sharing to enable a **streamlined customer journey for social and community enterprises** seeking support.
- Continue to champion **innovative methods of maximising the positive economic and social impact of community-controlled benefit from onshore wind**, developing a draft CWB framework for future community benefit and tackling barriers to shared ownership.
- Facilitate the delivery of the **Community Land Scotland national Natural Capital and Communities Partnership** in the South of Scotland, supporting the delivery of community benefits from natural capital projects through funding and strategic advice.
- Deliver a **CWB progressive procurement pilot for energy efficiency retrofit** through a partnership with regional Registered Social Landlords, University of Edinburgh School of Engineering, BE-ST & Changeworks on the nationally recognised archetypes approach – focussed on local procurement, supply chain development and proving scalability.
- Lead a **regional assessment of Community Wealth Building** with Community Planning Partners in Dumfries & Galloway, mapping activity across the 5 pillars of CWB.

#### Our Primary Performance Measures

- Number of new or improved income-generating community assets supported.



## CASE STUDY

# Better Benefit for Communities from Onshore Wind

Part of Scotland's Just Transition to Net Zero will be moving away from carbon-based energy production to more generation of renewable energy. We know that with the South of Scotland's landscape and natural capital, there is significant interest in growing the number of onshore wind installations generating green and renewable electricity in our area.

Where wind farms are built, there are normally payments to local community groups in the form of **Community Benefits**. A SOSE-commissioned study by BIGGAR Economics to establish a baseline for Community Benefit in the South of Scotland, found that since 1996, wind farms had generated £30.9 million in community benefit in the South of Scotland, and estimated that by 2033, this could rise to £12 million annually. Crucially though, the study found that the adherence to Good Practice Principles, which recommends that community benefits are equivalent to at least £5,000 per installed MW per year, were quite variable, with some communities getting significantly less.

In 2024, SOSE held **five community engagement events**, which brought together people from 40 communities across the South of Scotland to discuss:

- the consistency of developer approaches to community benefits;
- how best practice can be acknowledged and shared;
- flexibility of funding;
- the need for upfront investment; and
- ensuring agreements with developers are watertight.

We also received valuable feedback on the challenges communities have around the potential of **shared ownership of onshore wind projects**. Importantly, the ethos for these sessions were that community benefits were community controlled, and that they should remain so, whilst SOSE would be available to help assist communities to deliver a lasting legacy.

Following these sessions, SOSE has been working to develop, in consultation with engagement event attendees, a **South of Scotland Charter** of best practice for developers, which would guide the standards that developers should uphold when engaging with communities on new developments. The aim of this work is to ensure that Communities can secure a good deal from developers, which would then allow them to invest in projects which deliver **transformational change**.



# Attracting Ambitious Investment

- Raising the regional profile
- Creating opportunity through ambitious and diverse investment
- Advocating for and supporting improvements to infrastructure
- Developing regional supply chains

## Our key activity across 2025-26

### As SOSE...

- Continue to develop the **Invest in South of Scotland website** to showcase the wide range of benefits of doing business in the region and attract more inward investment, including **development of a property/premises search function**.
- Act as the **main point of contact for potential inward investors**, co-ordinating input from other partners, ensuring their requirements are met and encouraging them to set up their business in the region.
- Continue to refine and promote our **Inward Investment offer**, building on existing activities and **sharpening our focus and capabilities on aiding delivery** reflecting our growing success in securing investment.
- Co-ordinate and lead efforts to **maximise the supply chain development opportunities** associated with major inward investment proposals.
- Manage and develop a **property and land portfolio**, implementing our **property investment strategy** to support strategic investments; respond to place-based opportunities and meet investment demand.
- Invest in and promote our **Chapelcross Energy Transition Zone**, creating serviced plots with the aim of generating jobs and inward investment focussed on the transition to green energy production.
- Continue to support **South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA)** to spearhead efforts to raise the profile of the region and help **drive a sustainable increase in visitors to the area**.
- Invest in and support the **visitor economy** through direct funding and offering support, advice and mentoring from our business and community advisors.
- Deliver a further round of the **South of Scotland Cycling Infrastructure Fund**.

### Our Primary Performance Measures

- **Total value of funding leveraged for the South; Value of Inward Investment; Increase in client turnover; Increase in proportion of turnover from Green, Inclusive and Community enterprises.**

### In Collaboration...

- Deliver **engaging and creative campaigns** to promote and raise awareness of the South of Scotland nationally and internationally to help attract ambitious investment to the region.
- Proactively engage with **Scottish Development International (SDI) and GlobalScots** to develop, raise awareness of, and better promote the strength of our regional offer.
- Work to create a **large-scale, strategic, mixed-use employment site at the wider Chapelcross site** which delivers significant and transformational economic impact for the region and Scotland.
- Drive activity to deliver the **Eyemouth Port Masterplan** and seize opportunities from offshore wind investment and wider marine economy for the region.
- Better understand and take a **proactive approach to overcoming constraints on strategic and allocated employment sites**, resulting in an increased supply and spread of sites and premises to enable growth and inward investment.
- Implement the **South of Scotland Housing Action Plan**, creating and more effectively promoting development opportunities that will enable the growth of our existing construction sector and attract others to the region – ultimately boosting the delivery of new homes of all types and tenures.
- Ensure there is an **attractive proposition to develop and attract people to the area**, aligned to the needs and demands of existing and new enterprise.
- Encourage investment and innovation in the deployment of **green data technology and infrastructure** – demonstrating clean heat re-use and supercharging local industries & supply chains.
- Agree **prioritisation of, and deliver actions within, the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy**, grouped around the strategy's four key strands to: inspire visitors; develop the visitor experience; support businesses to succeed; and act responsibly for long-term collective benefit.
- Ensure retention of the **South of Scotland UCI Velo Region** label and maximise its ongoing benefit for the region.
- Support the delivery of the **South of Scotland Cycling Partnership Strategy** and associated workstream of projects.
- Continue to actively contribute to Stranraer's **'One Waterfront' approach** and the development and delivery of investment and projects that will transform Stranraer's waterfront into a vibrant **cultural and leisure destination, boosting tourism and economic growth** through **creative and community empowered placemaking**.



## CASE STUDY

# Invest IN South of Scotland Website

A shared ambition across partners in the South of Scotland is raising the profile of the region and highlighting the opportunities for inward investment. To do so, SOSE has come together with other key regional organisations to develop an **'Invest IN South of Scotland'** brand.

Building on this, last year we launched the **Invest IN South of Scotland website**, which showcases the benefits of doing business in the South of Scotland, providing clear information for inward investors, as well as providing a means for them to get in touch with the Invest in South of Scotland partners, to discuss opportunities.

The website launched, featuring an interactive map, showcasing our ideal central location in the UK and also showcased opportunities for investment in key areas such as energy transition and Natural Capital, Food and Drink innovation, Creative Economy and in cycling. It also features a range of case studies with businesses who operate in the South – providing inspiration and credibility.

Collective efforts have led to a significant uplift in Inward Investment enquiries, demonstrating the draw that the South of Scotland has for those looking to start, expand or relocate their business. The website builds on this uplift, and provides a clear entry point for investors to come and discuss their ideas with the key public sector partners in the region.





## Awakening Entrepreneurial Talent

- Inspiring and embedding entrepreneurial activity and enterprise ambition
- Promoting a culture of entrepreneurship
- Supporting the establishment of growth clusters
- Unlocking creative and cultural excellence

### Our key activity across 2025-26

#### As SOSE...

- Build on the success of the **Pathways Pilot**, applying the learning to strengthen and refine our support for all founders and leveraging our experience to shape future support and secure maximum impact for the South.
- Continue to deliver and expand upon our nationally recognised **ActivatE, AcceleratE and InnovatE programmes** – ensuring comprehensive support from initial entrepreneurial ideas through to scale up and sustainable growth.
- Deliver **Business Gateway Scottish Borders**, integrating with SOSE's wider support offer to boost business start-ups and survival rates.
- Maintain a relentless focus, through **dedicated pre-start coaching**, on seeking to support more women, young people and others from underrepresented groups to establish enterprises.
- Deliver an **annual programme of enterprise sessions** – open and accessible to all – aimed at offering the knowledge and practical skills to **empower enterprises to thrive and grow** as well as **inspiring and connecting participants**.
- Continue to work with **CODEBase** to support the delivery of and ensure enterprises in the South of Scotland have access to the **Tech Scaler programme**.
- Explore opportunities to create an eco-system of capability and practitioners in the South of Scotland to **maximise the potential of AI and Deep Tech** as a stimulant to drive business start-up and innovation.
- Support more clients to help drive sustained **growth in international exports**.
- Build on our **innovative mapping of the creative economy**, by undertaking a **comprehensive data project to understand and support the music sector** in the South of Scotland.

#### In Collaboration...

- Continue to align and further strengthen strategic partnerships to **enhance the South of Scotland entrepreneurial ecosystem** – building on the region's reputation as leading the way in entrepreneurial support.
- Work with **SRUC to create an entrepreneurial campus** within the region focussed on unlocking the potential of the South's intellectual, human and natural capitals.
- Adopt a 'team Scotland' approach – working with SG, HIE and SE – to **explore opportunities and interventions to accelerate the potential of AI, Robotics and Automation to drive digital entrepreneurship** across our rural geography.
- Support **delivery of the actions identified in the South of Scotland Screen Strategy**, further enhancing the region's growing reputation as a filming location of choice.
- Deliver a further round of the **Rural Leadership Programme**, equipping more of our rural business leaders with the skills to embrace rapid change and future-proof their businesses.
- Explore opportunities with academic partners to **strengthen links between existing and planned research opportunities and entrepreneurial activity**.
- Work with DYW and others to **reach, stimulate and nurture an entrepreneurial mindset in those in secondary education**, showcasing business start-up as a credible and positive post education pathway.
- Deliver a follow up **Esports event** – working with College, Council and DYW partners – aimed at **igniting a passion to pursue a career and/or business within the Esports or wider creative economy**.

#### Our Primary Performance Measures

- **Number of people engaged in entrepreneurship; Proportion of people engaged in entrepreneurship who are: women, young people, other underrepresented groups.**



## CASE STUDY

# Esports Development Event

One of Scotland's successes in recent decades has been in **video game development** and SOSE has been working to develop the industry, where we can, in the South of Scotland.

An example of this was the recent **Borders Esports development event** which was held at Borders College in November of 2024. The event, which was organised in collaboration with **Borders College, Scottish Borders Council and DYW Borders** gave students from secondary schools across the Scottish Borders the opportunity to come together to learn more about Esports and the opportunities that there are to create, promote and manage Esports teams.

Guest speakers included Esports industry veteran and **Team Dignitas** founder Michael O'Dell (ODEE), who is currently Director of Pro Gaming and Esports for **SCAN Computers**, along with Paul Coyle, Business Manager and Esports and Gaming in Education for SCAN Computers.

Odee and Paul gave an inspiring presentation on the Esports industry, highlighting to pupils the wide range of career pathways linked to the industry, from roles in Esports such as coaching, analysis and playing professionally to tech-based careers such as gaming design, gaming systems, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence. The pair also highlighted the academic links and skills sets that develop through Esports.

With Esports due to have its own Olympics under the International Olympic Committee, pupils were also able to chat to Esports gamer **Reece Devlin**, who represented Scotland at Euro 2020.



## Advancing Innovation and Improving Productivity

- Promoting an understanding of and improvements to productivity
- Championing innovative ways of working and creativity
- Creating and enhancing conditions to collaborate and foster innovation
- Enabling digital advances and enterprise digitalisation
- Pioneering circular economic growth

### Our key activity across 2025-26

#### As SOSE...

- Maintain a **proactive and tailored support offering to enable continuous improvement which gives rise to enhanced productivity and profitability** of enterprises within the South.
- Develop a specific **offer for high-growth, innovative enterprises** (start-up, existing or inward investment) to enable them to scale and flourish in the South and maximise their impact.
- Develop a support offering and promotional campaign to **help enterprises to get 'innovation ready'**, helping empower them to embrace and drive change and creating a pipeline for future rounds of innovation related funds.
- Build on the success of the **Work Smarter Fund** and **CreaTech Funds** as a catalyst for innovation, increasing the available budget and expanding their scope to increase reach and impact.
- Sustain a strong focus on **driving digital adoption and transformation** across the region, highlighting new technology through our **pop-up enterprise sessions** and via **1-2-1 support and capability building programmes**.
- Continue to lead work to deliver the Borderlands and nationally significant **Mountain Bike Innovation Centre and Trail Lab** at Innerleithen.
- Support implementation of the **National Innovation Strategy**, supporting key workstreams including growth of priority clusters and areas of importance to the regional and rural economy.
- Participate in **Scotland's Innovation Stakeholder Forum**, ensuring alignment of efforts, sharing experiences and raising the profile of innovation opportunities and progress in the South.
- Establish a **South of Scotland Future's hub**, to create an environment for start-ups, scale ups and SMEs to **innovate in advanced manufacturing and product design using deep tech/AI as a catalyst**, building the foundations for a deep-tech cluster across the South of Scotland.

#### In Collaboration...

- Run a series of **Best Practice visits in collaboration with SMAS**, facilitating businesses to share experience with a focus on Continuous Improvement.
- **Influence national conversations on innovation and clusters** – providing clarity about innovation priorities and emerging sectors in the South.
- Finalise and launch a strategic framework as a focus for **strengthening alignment and maximising the impact of Innovate UK support** within Scotland, influencing Innovate UK's new regional focus.
- **Stimulate innovation focussed collaborations**, working with Scotland's National Innovation Centres, academic and other partners to encourage a greater research and innovation footprint across the region.
- Secure investment to deliver an **Adventure Bike Park** in parallel to the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre.
- Make the most of the **nationally significant Dairy Nexus**; a flagship facility that re-positions the region at the forefront of industry-focused, rural co-innovation and knowledge exchange - driving transformational research and innovation to decarbonise the dairy sector and move towards a circular bioeconomy.
- Work with **SRUC** to maximise opportunities through the **Digital Dairy Chain** for local supply chains.
- Support the delivery of the **Borderlands Digital Programme** including the **Borderlands led Innovative 5G Regions Projects** - focussed on supporting tourist operations and the visitor experience at Destination Tweed and Stranraer.
- Raise awareness of the support available to **protect intellectual business assets** within the region including promoting and maximising the uptake of the refreshed **Intellectual Property Office** offer.
- Support **Cultural Strategy development** in the Scottish Borders and continue to support the delivery of the Cultural Strategy in Dumfries & Galloway.

#### Our Primary Performance Measures

- **Number of clients supported to innovate; Value of capital investment by clients; Number of clients that have increased their digital capabilities; Increase in client profitability.**



## CASE STUDY

# Work Smarter Fund – Sky-Pin Drones Ltd

One of SOSE's core roles is supporting enterprises across the South of Scotland to **embrace innovation and improve their productivity**. To aid this, we launched and delivered a **Work Smarter Fund** across 2024/25, which provided grants of up to £5,000 to businesses and social enterprises to introduce new capital equipment that allowed them to 'work smarter'.

Many businesses across the region enthusiastically embraced new ways of working as a result of the encouragement and support received from SOSE advisors and enabled by the Fund. Most projects included automating processes that were previously completed manually by hand, with changes maximising staff time as well as driving improvements in the quality of products and services.

One recipient of the Fund was **Sky-Pin Drones Ltd**, a company founded in 2017 by James Braid which began offering aerial drone services, specialising in aerial mapping surveys. To meet the growing demand for precision agriculture and environmental restoration, James set his sights on expanding the services to include crop spraying and spreading, seeding for conservation projects, greenhouse shading and cleaning, and solar panel inspection and cleaning. To enable this, a cutting-edge 110kg drone with a wingspan of over two metres, costing close to £50,000, was required.

SOSE assisted with the business plan, cash flow forecast, and signposted the client to **DSL** for an **Investment Fund for Scotland** loan, also providing £5,000 through the SOSE **Work Smarter Fund**. SOSE continues to support the business with networking opportunities and events. The drone technology has positively impacted ecological projects like peatland restoration and habitat management. James is excited about future growth as more people recognise the benefits of drones in agriculture and land management, which includes helping farmers reduce their environmental impact by using data, fewer chemicals, and conserving resources.

An **expanded Work Smarter Fund** will be delivered across 2025/26 to help even more enterprises in the South of Scotland to innovate.



# Our Key Enabling Activities Across 2025/26

## Raising our profile and helping people to better understand what we do at SOSE and how to access our support

- Continue to **deliver our Marketing and Communications Strategy** focused on key pillars of activity with the objectives **to Inspire the region** to embrace Innovation, Net Zero, Nature-based solutions and Fair Work; **Showcase the South** as a place to invest; **Encourage people to reach out to us** no matter what stage of their journey they are at; and **Enhance and protect SOSE's reputation**.
- Collaborate with partners regionally and nationally to **extend our reach and amplify the profile of SOSE and the region nationally and internationally**.
- Be **proactive in promoting news stories and case studies** to help inspire others and encourage people to reach out to us.
- Develop **creative approaches to using social media** to further raise our profile and increase engagement.
- Ensure our **publicity policy is being adhered to** by those who have received SOSE funding
- Maximise the impact of **bespoke activity and existing engagement** opportunities.

## Seeking out and responding to new opportunities to accelerate our work and advance the South, recognising that we are still developing our knowledge of and profile in the region and more widely

- **Clarify and amplify our regional investment prospectus** - providing clarity on and the narrative underpinning the region's potential and key assets & credentials.
- **Enhance and continue our core business, enterprise and community support functions** which will encompass advice and support in line with our areas of strategic focus and established and emerging priorities.
- Work with key partners to ensure **clear messaging** about how our different but aligned roles and offers complement each other.
- Engage with national and international partners and organisations to **create opportunities for partnerships** that advance the South and raise the profile of SOSE and the South on a wider stage.

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### Driving the work of the Regional Economic Partnership to champion and enable a strong regional focus and approach on key issues for the South

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- Hosting the jointly funded **Regional Economic Partnership (REP) Secretariat**, supporting and empowering them to harness the full potential of the diverse range of expertise and interests across the Partnership.
- Deliver effective **Regional Economic Partnership meetings**, ensuring Members are supported to maximise their contributions.
- Provide leadership and capacity - adding to that of the REP secretariat - to help **drive progress against the refreshed REP Delivery Plan priorities**, including the three main challenges of housing, transport and skills.
- Lead the delivery of the **REP Communications Strategy** working with key partners to showcase the work of the REP and the impact of their work.
- Chair, oversee the secretariat for and support the work of the **South of Scotland Education and Skills Strategic Coordination Group (ESSCG)** as a key subgroup of the REP.
- Ensure that the **Convention of the South of Scotland** focuses on agreed key issues, shaping agendas, driving actions and supporting delivery via the REP Secretariat.
- Contribute to the work of **Scotland's REP Network**, accessing and sharing learning and raising the profile of the South of Scotland.

### Strengthening and expanding our knowledge of the South of Scotland through the work of our insights team so we can enhance and focus our efforts

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- Run a regular **business survey**, sharing outputs and information with partners and publishing on our website.
- Develop creative ways, including dashboard type approaches, to **making evidence accessible** and sharing wider insights and research with partners.
- Use the knowledge and understanding gained from the evidence base to **support and refine our decision-making** and tailor our support and interventions to the needs of the region.
- Understand and **act upon gaps in strategic activity** required to deliver sustainable growth for the region.

### Contributing to national policy development and delivery by sharing intelligence of the experiences of and opportunities within the South of Scotland

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- Engage with Scottish Government and UK Government to ensure **perspectives of the South of Scotland and our strengths** are better understood.
- Respond to consultations and **participate as members of key national groups** including Industry Leadership Groups.

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## Driving continuous improvement across all that we do

- **Develop and deliver the programme of change** in line with the new agreed strategic direction of SOSE, as we become an intelligence led, influencer - overseen by the Board and implemented by the Programme Delivery Team.
- Contribute to the **public reform agenda**, embracing opportunities to pilot new approaches.
- **Capture learning from major projects** we are involved in and using that learning to shape our and partners future activity.
- **Launch and implement MySOSE**, our new Customer Relationship Management system.
- **Draw on the learning from** the evaluation of our inclusion in the **Scottish Governments Working Week pilot** to inform future working arrangements that maximise productivity and wellbeing gains.

## Tracking our progress and measuring the impact that we want to have through our own efforts and our involvement in wider strategic and partnership working

- Focus on **system and data refinement** to build upon and enhance accuracy, reliability, and efficiency in our measurement processes.
- Review initial **targets** set and reported against in 24/25 and set 25/26 targets.
- Capture additional 'supporting measures' aligned with the development of MySOSE to **enhance our data collection and analysis**.
- Explore realistic and sustainable methods of **capturing intangible benefits through SOSE's Expert Impact** with the aim of setting a baseline in 25/26.
- Further develop **Pipeline management and reporting** to maximise impact of projects and activities with the ability to seize opportunities.
- Lead partnership work to develop and implement a **performance measurement framework for the Regional Economic Strategy**.
- Support Implementation of Scottish Government's **National Innovation Strategy** with delivery of regular reporting.

## Ensuring effective, informed and inclusive governance and decision making in our own organisation

- Ensure **effective SOSE Board and Committee meetings** supported by our Board Secretariat.

# Performance Measurement Framework

We launched our PMF in 2023, including new systems and processes allowing us to assess and monitor the effectiveness of our delivery, aligned to each of Our six A's.

Since 2023/24, we can reflect our performance by focusing on the **Primary Measures** in our PMF. With our systems and processes continuing to be developed, this enables us to capture and monitor the impact our work has on the South of Scotland.

2023/24 was the key year whereby we were able to set a baseline for data. This has been built upon across 2024/25 as we strive to grow our data intelligence. 2025/26 will be vital in capturing our third year of data to enable us to have gathered sufficient historical data to analyse and monitor trends against our Direct Impact. This stronger knowledge base will aid us to set ambitious yet realistic targets whilst also supporting informed, data-led decision-making.

Measures of our organisational performance and direct impact include:

**Primary Measures** align to our six areas of strategic focus – Our six A's

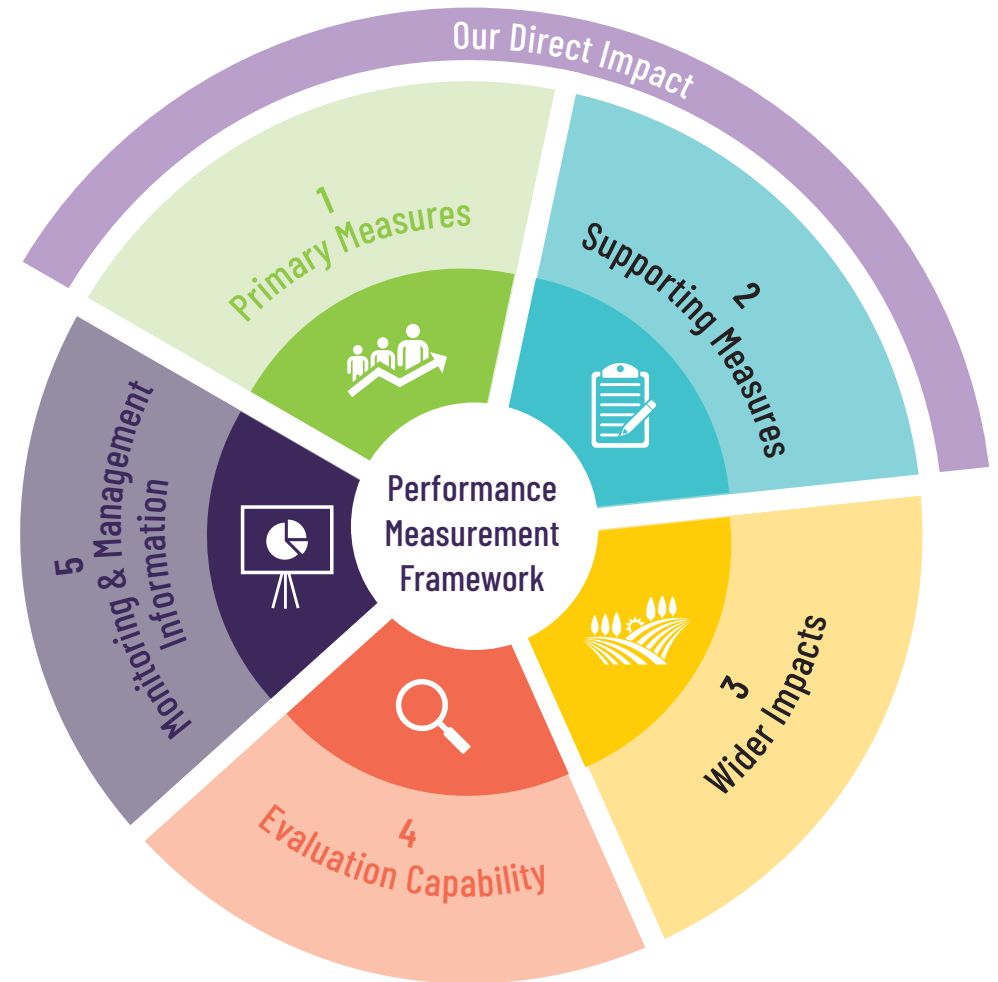
**Supporting Measures** delve deeper into our six A's and/or represent prioritised areas of performance and impact

Tracking **Wider Impacts**; regional-level economic, social, and environmental performance indicators

**Evaluation Capability**, to enable in-depth evaluations of specific areas of work

**Management Information and monitoring processes**, to track projects are delivering as planned and ensure we are operating effectively

Each year we publish our Annual Report and Accounts which details our performance alongside our audited accounts.





# Annexes

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Appendix B - Our Operating Budget for 2025/26 .....	27

## Appendix A

# Our Organisation (as at 31st March 2025)

As an organisation we are currently structured around four Directorates – Finance and Corporate Resources; Net Zero, Nature and Entrepreneurship; Strategy, Partnership & Engagement; and Place and Enterprise – led by our Chief Executive, Jane Morrison-Ross.

There are **141.32 FTEs** in SOSE.



**Jane Morrison-Ross**  
Chief Executive



**Allan Harrow**  
Interim Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

- Governance & Assurance and Legal
- IT & Digital Programme
- Property
- Finance Services (including Procurement and Audit)
- HR, Fair Work, Equalities and Facilities Management (including Health & Safety)
- Change and Continuous Improvement

**29.14 FTEs**



**Dr Martin Valenti**  
Director of Net Zero, Nature and Entrepreneurship

- Net Zero Transition
- Energy Transition
- Agricultural Transition
- Natural Capital & Investment
- Sustainability
- Entrepreneurship

**26.8 FTEs**



**Karen Jackson**  
Director of Strategy, Partnership & Engagement

- Communication & Marketing
- Economy & Insights
- Strategy, Planning & Partnerships

**23.91 FTEs**



**Anthony Daye**  
Acting Director of Place and Enterprise

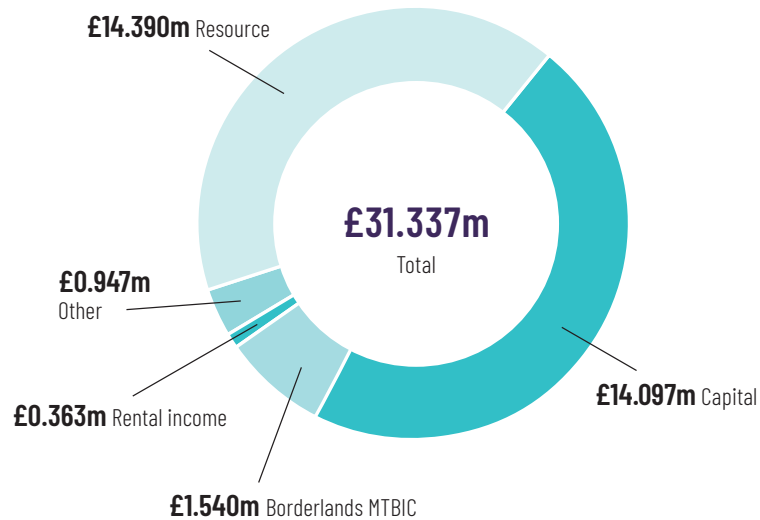
- Enterprising Business and Communities
- Economic Infrastructure
- Performance Measurement and Pipelines

**61.47 FTEs**

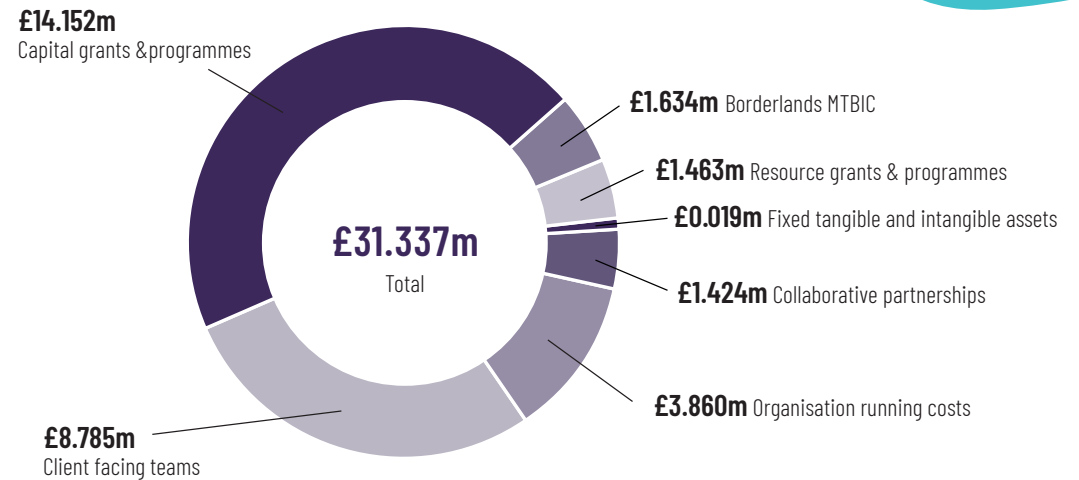
## Appendix B

# Our Operating Budget for 2025/26

### Income



### Expenditure



#### Note:

- The South of Scotland Enterprise Grant In Aid cash allocation is £28.487m; the total Grant In Aid budget for SOSE is £29.137m which includes other elements relating to administration and non-cash items.
- Budget above is cash only and includes Grant in Aid and income from other sources.
- Fixed tangible and intangible asset numbers include land sales treated in accordance with FReM as negative expenditure
- Collaborative Partnerships with other strategic bodies include finance, IT and HR support.
- Organisation running costs includes all remaining staff costs out with the Client Facing Teams, and other business and estates costs.

# Contact Us

Find out more at

**[www.southofscotlandenterprise.com](http://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com)**

Or get in touch to find out how we can tailor our support to your individual needs and circumstances

**[www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/contact-us](http://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/contact-us)**

**0300 304 8888**

To request this document in an alternative format, such as large print, different language or on coloured paper please get in touch with us.

Correct as of March 2025

