



Operating Plan

2024/25



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Foreword

Our 2024/25 Operating Plan, sets out South of Scotland Enterprise's priorities for the year ahead. Specifically, it sets out what actions and activity we will take to deliver further change and drive even more progress against our six areas of strategic focus – captured as our six As – and through doing so continue to make a real and lasting difference for people, place and planet across the South of Scotland.

Whilst national, regional and our own established strategies are important influences on what we do, our focus for the year ahead has, once again, been shaped by listening to people across the South of Scotland. We are, as always, grateful to all who gave their time to engage with us, highlighting opportunities we should be pursuing and helping to set out the challenges we need to address.

2024/25 is going to be a challenging year for all of us but we are absolutely determined to continue to deliver on the priorities for our region. These challenges we all face emphasise the need for us to work closely together with those who can help fulfil our ambitions to create the South of Scotland we all want to see.

We look forward with optimism, and a growing track record of delivering more tangible results through focussed and meaningful partnerships. We are committed to continuing to lead and drive joint working, adding in our resources to help accelerate and deliver where

others on their own can not. Testament to this is our ongoing support to help drive progress against the three widely agreed key regional challenges of housing, transport and skills.

Everyone within SOSE is committed to ensuring that the year ahead is another successful one for us all, driven by an unwavering passion in helping communities, businesses, social enterprises and all of the people of the South of Scotland to thrive, grow and fulfil the potential we know the region has.

As always, our message to anyone who may have an idea, or needs support is – get in touch with us. Our support is tailored to you. We listen first and then aim to work with you and partners to deliver what is needed to build a thriving future for us all, in the wonderful South of Scotland.



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 - exist to ensure that the South of Scotland benefits from a fresh, ambitious and regionally focussed approach to economic and community development, which addresses the distinct opportunities of our mainly rural region. We were established through legislation, the South of Scotland Enterprise Act 2019, assuming our powers and launching on 1 April 2020.

Covering Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, our focus as a public body is to help people, communities and enterprises in our region to thrive, grow and fulfil their potential.

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 focus is now grouped around six key themes - **our Six As** - 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

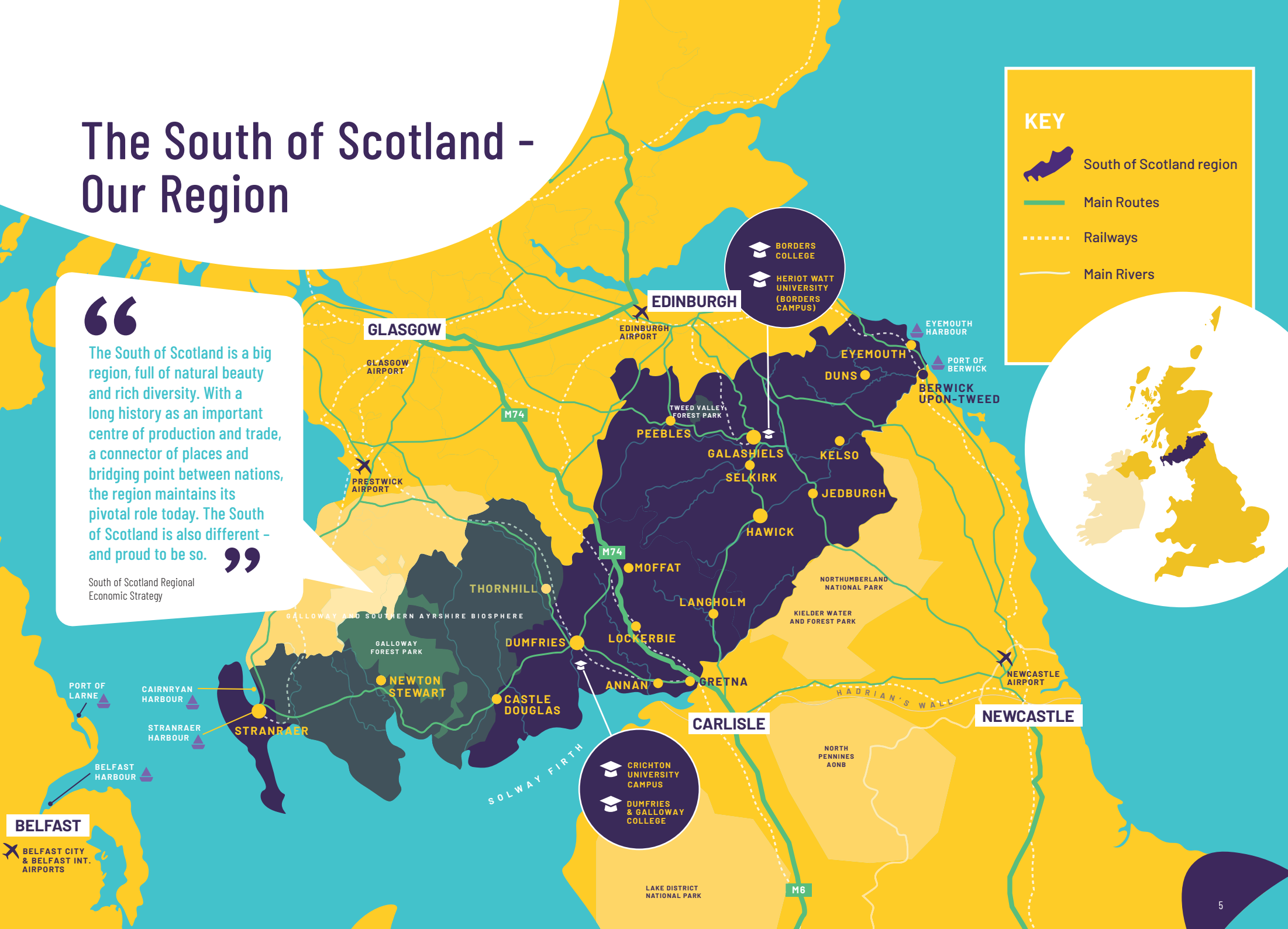
KEY

-  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 is a key document, making clear where we will focus our efforts across the next five years – 2023 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 and places.

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 2024 through to 31 March 2025.

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 also shaping some of our operational focus. This reflects that **we continue to be directly involved in supporting the delivery of many of the actions in both the RES and NSET** – working collaboratively with our partners to do so.

A refresh of NSET and the RES Delivery Plan has now commenced, but in both cases this is focussed on arriving at a smaller, more targeted number of areas for collaborative action, to help sharpen the focus on delivery and ultimately impact, as opposed to any change in strategic direction.

At the heart of a sharpened focus from a regional perspective, is the identification of **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 and Partnership (RLUP).

For each of the three main challenges, and as a next step for the RLUP, work is ongoing to develop specific actions. **As SOSE, we have been working collaboratively with partners to advance this work, providing leadership and capacity to identify clear areas for collaboration and action.**



Our Summer Tour (2023)

In the Summer of 2023, we undertook our third engagement tour, to meet people in their communities and hear what their ambitions and aspirations are for the South of Scotland, as well as the challenges they face.

The Tour came on the back of the launch of 'Our Five-Year Plan', so gave us the opportunity to tell the public what our plans were for us as an organisation, and how we will work to unlock the potential of the South of Scotland.

We held a number of town hall style meetings, fronted by our Chair and Chief Executive, across 11 places in the South of Scotland. We also supplemented these with attendance at other events, online sessions, and for the first time we held an informal drop-in style session that featured our information in written, audio and visual formats, which was suited to a wide range of ages and abilities.

We met and heard from a diverse range of people, with varying levels of awareness and understanding about us as an organisation and our offer. The many new connections made have already been fruitful and we know there is even more we can do to keep connecting with enterprises and communities across the South of Scotland.

The views we heard were important in informing our activity last year and have also informed the development of this Operating Plan.

SOSE SUMMER TOUR

13

BESPOKE EVENTS

ACROSS THE SOUTH -
INCLUDING IN PERSON
AND ONLINE

ATTRACTING OVER

150
PEOPLE



ATTENDANCE AT TWO
MAJOR AGRICULTURAL
SHOWS IN THE SOUTH

ENGAGING OVER
1,000
PEOPLE

What We Heard

“ There was **strong and genuine interest** in SOSE's **work and appetite to learn more, speak to our experts and understand how we work with partners** across the South. ”

“ Recognition of the **need to do more to retain young people in the region.** Including increasing the choice of skills and career pathways and a regional skills model that is responsive to our needs. ”

“ Asks that we **continue to support arts, culture, creativity and tangible cultural heritage** which are seen as important to the economy. ”

“ People recognised and welcomed **much of our support.** They appreciated the impact we are already having and thought that we were working to **create exciting opportunities** for the South. ”

“ **Enthusiasm for place planning.** People seeking assurance that SOSE and partners will support plans and 'collaborate not duplicate'. ”

“ **Acknowledgement of complexity around tourism** - economically very important but facing real challenges e.g. from legislation, capacity constraints and needing to work better with communities. ”

“ There was **agreement about the three priority issues** for the South- **housing, transport and skills.** All recognised as important to a high performing economy with **partnership key to making change happen.** Appetite to look at quick wins and long-term solutions. ”

“ **Interest in progress on RLUF and Net Zero, rural implications and what SOSE is doing practically.** Recognition of the economic opportunity. ”

“ **Questions about how SOSE allocates resources- including funding** - and **our plans** for the next five years particularly in current financial climate. ”

Overview of Activity in 2023/24 – Key Highlights*

We come into the second year of our Five-Year Plan on the back of a successful year of delivery across 2023/24. Whilst the full impact of what we achieved will be detailed in our fourth Annual Report and Accounts, to be published separately later in the year, we have taken the opportunity to ensure that in looking ahead across 2024/25, we reflect and build on the achievements, learning and momentum from the past year.

Overview



Assisted **over 1,000** enterprises through **funding, programmes** and tailored **support** and **advice**



c.1700 real living wage jobs created and/or safeguarded



Provided a **strong voice** for the South, including responding to **15 National Consultations**



Accredited as a **Gold Carbon Literate Organisation**

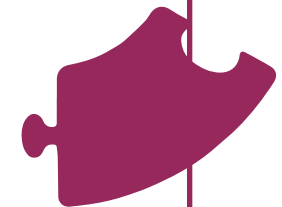
Accelerating Net Zero and Nature-Positive Solutions



- **Launched a £1m Net Zero Accelerator Fund** and ran a 12 month Net Zero Accelerator Programme
- Achieved **Scottish Government recognition** that the **South of Scotland** is the **national Natural Capital Innovation Zone**
- Following extensive consultation, led on the production of Scotland's first **Regional Land Use Framework**
- Established **purpose driven partnerships with SRUC and Zero Waste Scotland**

Attracting Ambitious Investment

- Developed and launched **www.investinsouthofscotland.com** to showcase the South of Scotland as the perfect place to do business
- Produced and launched the South of Scotland's first **Net Zero Investment Guide**
- Purchased **6.5-hectares of development land at Chapelcross** to help unlock the site's potential



*The 2023/24 activity and figures are subject to audit, SOSE's Audited Annual Report and Accounts are expected to be published around Sept 2024.

Advocating for Fair Work and Equality

- Created and launched the **SOSE Youth Advisory Forum**
- Awarded **Level 2 Disability Confident Employer status**
- Co-developed, working with **The Usual Place** in Dumfries, **information well suited to a wide range of ages and abilities**, to help better promote who we are and what we do



Activating and Empowering Enterprising Communities

- Delivered a **£500,000 pilot community ideas fund**
- Supporting **15 new or improved income-generating community assets**



Awakening Entrepreneurial Talent

- Engaged **c.1,450 people in entrepreneurial activity**
- Launched the **Creative Economy Guide** and a **£100,000 CreaTech Fund**
- Secured **£123,000 funding to deliver enterprising activity in Hawick Business Centre**



Advancing Innovation and Improving Productivity

- Supported **c.100 clients to innovate**
- Assisted **c.30 clients to increase their digital capabilities**
- Entered into **Strategic Partnership with Intellectual Property Office to support businesses seeking to protect their intellectual assets**



Delivering for the South: Our Key Activities and Focus Across 2024/25

Our Five-Year Plan provides a framework that guides our activity and resources around 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.

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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Continue to offer bespoke, tailored advice and signposting to any enterprise seeking to accelerate their transition to Net Zero, including climate resilience
- Launch a second round of our Net Zero Accelerator Fund, making £1M available to support innovative projects to accelerate the region towards Net Zero
- Establish a Natural Capital Innovation Fund, making £0.5m available to test and accelerate the deployment of nature-based solutions
- Develop our strategic thinking to realising opportunities presented by leveraging space capabilities and data
- Finalise the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme Data and Investment business cases
- Continue our engagement nationally on developing the Hydrogen Economy through bodies such as the Hydrogen Programme Board, and continue to encourage hydrogen projects in the region through activities such as our Hydrogen Brokerage Events and support to hydrogen production investors, supply chain and early adopters deploying hydrogen technologies
- Work towards accreditation as a Platinum Carbon Literate Organisation
- Develop proposals to realise our ambition of having a Net Zero operational footprint by 2038

In Collaboration...

- Deliver a South of Scotland route map to Net Zero, working with our local authority partners and the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service
- Drive the development and launch of a South of Scotland Energy Transition Plan – creating certainty to drive investment and skills decisions
- Continue to support the development of the Borderlands Energy Masterplan as it moves towards delivery of its Investment Programme
- Initialise the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme
- Develop and deliver the South of Scotland Natural Capital Innovation Zone, supported by a robust Communication Strategy for the region, using purpose driven partnerships to deliver outcomes across innovation, regenerative agriculture and biodiversity
- Establish the formal Regional Land Use Partnership to deliver innovative and sustainable approaches to land use across the region
- Support delivery of the Destination Tweed project, utilising existing and new investment to realise wide ranging economic, social and environmental benefits
- Develop and deliver the South of Scotland Agriculture Transition Action Plan, building resilience and opportunity within our farming industry
- Establish a framework to develop sustainable food and drink supply chains
- Establish a South of Scotland Sustainable Forestry Management approach

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

Crichton Carbon Centre - Flux Tower Project

One of our regions biggest strengths is our Natural Capital. This was recognised last year, when it was agreed with Scottish Government and local partners, to position the South of Scotland as Scotland's Natural Capital Innovation Zone. Whilst our Natural Capital is strong, across Scotland it is degrading and it is vital that we continue to build our understanding of our precious geology, soil, seas and freshwater, air, habitats and greenspaces, and enhance them as assets in Scotland's Just Transition to Net Zero.

In order to build an understanding of peatland restoration, the Crichton Carbon Centre planned to build the South of Scotland's first Flux Tower near Dumfries. Measuring 14 metres tall and sited within a commercial woodland, the tower will measure greenhouse gas emissions from the peatland below. The data will be combined with readings from other towers across Scotland to better understand how forestry planted on peatland effects the ability for the peatland to store carbon from the atmosphere. Whilst the tower installation was largely funded by NatureScot, SOSE provided vital funding to help the Crichton Carbon Centre cover associated capital costs.

The findings from this project will also help support other pieces of work being taken forward in our region, such as the Borderlands Natural Capital Programme, and the Regional Land Use Partnership and its Land Use Framework.



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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Through our client interactions and grant funding levers, ensure advocacy for fair working practices, equality of opportunity and inclusion underpin all other activity
- Develop enhanced client case studies on Fair Work, as well as the development of a new client guide and series of interactive workshops to support more enterprises on their Fair Work journey
- Continue to monitor, capture and report back to Scottish Government, to inform future policy developments, positive and/or unintended consequences from implementing Fair Work First principles, including conditionality
- Expand our dedicated Youth and Women's coaching capacity and support offer
- Support our Youth Advisory Forum as a means through which the voice of young people can shape the future economy of the South of Scotland, growing its membership to cover the Scottish Borders
- Work towards Level 3 Disability Confident Accreditation, leading by example and championing the need and benefits from thinking differently about disability

Our Primary Performance Measures

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

In Collaboration...

- Facilitate discussions and 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 skills and pathways
- Deliver the strategic priorities of the Crichton Campus Leadership Group, including helping to facilitate the delivery of student accommodation
- Drive forward and implement the shared ambitions and actions of No One Left Behind, through active participation in the regions' two Local Employability Partnerships
- Aid more enterprises to diversify, develop and deliver employability support in response to local needs and opportunities
- Further develop our crisis recovery toolkit and work with partners locally and nationally to support Third Sector organisations to pivot, restructure and become more resilient and financially sustainable
- Support the transitional arrangement to enable consolidation and progression of the Additional Support Needs Network within the Third Sector
- Support TSI D&G to lead on exploring innovative approaches to community transport delivery and partnerships
- Support the implementation of local Child Poverty Action Plans, maximising opportunities to directly eradicate poverty through economic growth and transformation



CASE STUDY

SOSE Youth Advisory Forum

During our engagement with those living in the South, the need to afford young people a voice and provide them with the opportunity to help shape the future economy of their region came through strongly.

We were keen to make sure we did this in a way that was not tokenistic, so we spent time co-designing and creating a model that would bring benefits to the young people we would go on to work closely with as well as SOSE.

In October 2023, we launched the first ever South of Scotland Enterprise Youth Advisory Forum. Our first group, based in the Dumfries and Galloway region, consists of members aged between 16 and 25 who come from a range of backgrounds.

Since then, the group have been providing their views on different workstreams that SOSE are leading on or are collaborating with external partners to deliver. They have discussed what it is like to study in Dumfries and Galloway, how the performance of the Regional Economic Strategy can be measured in an easy-to-understand way, and how the Open University in Scotland can engage with the wider community as part of the European Lunar Symposium (of which SOSE are partners). They have also considered a range of youth focused projects seeking funding, opting to support a traditional skills project that works with young people experiencing barriers into employment.

One of our motivations for developing our own Forum was that we could invest time into developing the Members into the changemakers of the future. To date, we have provided them with tailored training to increase their confidence and resilience, and 1-to-1 mentoring to help them identify areas in which they would like to progress. To recognise their input to the Forum, some of the Members have opted in to complete a SCQF Level 5 Participative Democracy Certificate qualification in partnership with YouthLink Scotland. They have also been offered opportunities to attend external events, both locally and nationally, helping them to grow their networks and expand their knowledge in their specific areas of interest.

Our future plans for the Forum include expanding into the Scottish Borders.

In the brief time that it has been in existence, the Forum has already proved to be a valuable resource for SOSE. It is helping to make our decision-making more inclusive, helping to improve our region for future generations.



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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Strengthen the foundations and governance of community and social enterprises to enable ambitious, sustainable enterprise development including asset acquisition and development
- Further develop long-term support to encourage and assist growth in Social Enterprises, Co-operatives and employee owned businesses
- Deliver an enhanced Communities Ambition Fund, making £0.75m available to help unlock potential in ambitious communities
- Proactively facilitate community peer to peer learning
- Develop and deliver a communication strategy to raise awareness of Enterprising Communities support and impact
- Explore ways – as an anchor organisation within the South – to use our economic levers’ such as spend, employment and land and assets to maximise benefits for the economy, supply chains, communities, and the environment

In Collaboration...

- Support the operational delivery of place planning and investment in Borderlands Priority Places, as well as the efforts of other active communities to enable them to deliver community led regeneration including large scale infrastructure 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 and intelligence systems to enable a streamlined customer journey for enterprising communities seeking support
- Support the development and delivery of a range of projects using UK Levelling Up Funds
- Work with regional Registered Social Landlords and University of Edinburgh School of Engineering to develop a CWB progressive procurement pilot for energy efficiency retrofit, based on the nationally recognised archetypes approach
- Develop a joint approach with Scottish Land Commission to maximise community benefit and community wealth building with a specific focus on Forestry
- Work with communities, industry and Third Sector experts to champion innovative methods of maximising the positive economic and social impact of community-controlled benefit from onshore wind, highlighting the potential for community shared ownership of onshore renewables.

Our Primary Performance Measures

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



CASE STUDY

SOSE Community Ambition Pathfinder Fund

Our Community Ambition Pathfinder Fund is a capital fund to help unlock potential in ambitious communities. The fund supports projects with a strong Place focus, with evidence of community engagement, which test new ideas and/or lead to long term sustainability and inclusive growth through realising development opportunities.

We supported 6 projects across 2023/24 including 'Welcome to Tarras Valley' delivered by the Langholm Initiative. Established over 25 years ago, the Langholm Initiative is a community development trust for Eskdale and Liddesdale. The Tarras Valley Nature Reserve project is one of the largest community land buy-outs in Scotland. In total, the Initiative raised over £6M to acquire 10,500 acres of land from Buccleuch Estates. SOSE was a key supporter of the acquisition and is also funding a development officer for three years to help realise the potential of the asset and work towards financial sustainability. As part of the Community Ambition Pathfinder Fund, SOSE has supported the 'Welcome to Tarras Valley' project with an investment of £72,000. These funds helped the Initiative to develop the visitor infrastructure of the nature reserve (visitor toilets, audio/visual equipment to livestream wildlife, a car park, and visitor signage and counters). This will encourage visitors to enjoy the land and raise the profile of the reserve, supporting work to establish new revenue streams.

Nith Valley Leaf Trust, a charitable Trust set up in 2009 to advance local community development projects in Closeburn, Dumfriesshire, also benefitted from the Fund, being awarded a grant of £50,000 to purchase their local shop and an attached house. In addition to retaining a much-needed community facility in the village and additional affordable accommodation for the area, the project has provided local employment and raised new income for the community through varied enterprising activity including retail, housing and active travel as the grant also supported the purchase of ebikes for an ebike hire scheme.

Following the success of this pathfinder fund, the Community Ambition Fund is being repeated this year.

Some of the Tarras Valley team with a tapestry map of the nature reserve. It's made of wool from local sheep and fabrics made in local textile mills.

Photo: Langholm Initiative, 2024



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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Further 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 launch of a Property and Land prospectus
- Develop an Inward Investment Strategy, building on existing activities to refine and enhance our inward investment enquiry recording processes and our aftercare proposition
- Manage and develop a property and land portfolio, implementing the SOSE property investment strategy to support strategic investments to respond to place-based opportunities and meet investment demand
- Promote and invest in our Chapelcross Energy Transition Zone land holding to make it investor ready
- Proactively identify opportunities to support Net Zero supply chain development
- Launch a South of Scotland Space Strategy and develop an associated Action Plan, identifying capabilities within the region to contribute to space supply chain opportunities
- Contribute to the development of a national Green Industrial Strategy as a key driver for the investment needed to deliver Scotland's Net Zero ambitions
- Support more clients to help drive sustained growth in international exports
- Manage the South of Scotland Cycling Partnership Strategy and deliver an associated workstream of projects including a cycling infrastructure capital grants scheme
- Support South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) to put the South of Scotland on the map through the 'Scotland Starts Here' brand and help drive a sustainable increase in visitors to the area

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...

- Develop an engaging and creative campaign to raise awareness of the region 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
- Strengthen ambitions and unlock regional ports as 'Gateways to Green Growth', facilitating and enabling the region to benefit from a greater share of planned offshore renewable energy investment and associated supply chain opportunities
- Support the development of business cases for key projects across the South of Scotland growth deal programmes
- Work to create a large-scale, strategic, mixed-use employment site at Chapelcross which delivers significant economic impact
- Work to realise the benefits of large strategic projects such as Borders Innovation Park on the Lowood Estate
- Work to realise a 'Smart, Green' region with particular focus on harnessing the benefits of sustainable data facilities and advanced digital solutions
- Deliver actions within the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy
- Maximise the impact of the newly awarded South of Scotland UCI Velo Region label and recognition of investment in developing community cycling and related infrastructure and programmes
- Develop, launch and implement a South of Scotland Housing Action Plan – aimed at creating more homes of all tenures as a key enabler of growing our economy
- Support the REP driven work focussed on exploring opportunities to enhance transport connectivity and sustainability in the South of Scotland



CASE STUDY

Net Zero Starts Here – South of Scotland Net Zero Investment Guide

Following a commitment in the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, SOSE led a collaborative approach to the development of a Net Zero Investment Guide for the region. The guide was our first opportunity to articulate and promote some of our most compelling investment opportunities, showcasing the South of Scotland as a region of firsts and where Scotland's future economy starts.

The guide focuses on three key strengths of the South of Scotland: Renewable Energy, Natural Capital and our aspiration of enhancing our values-based and Fair Work economy. It was officially launched in August 2023.

The guide highlights the rich natural resources of the region, alongside a strong research base and a supportive business environment. It showcases how the South of Scotland hosts a thriving community of entrepreneurs, start-ups and well-established companies as well as how many are already responding to the Net Zero challenge in innovative ways. Critically, the guide outlines further opportunities to invest to lead the way and drive impact.



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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Continue to deliver and expand our Emerge and Elevate Programme, comprised of:
 - ActivatE programme, offering a more condensed format to support budding entrepreneurs or startups at the beginning of their journey
 - AcceleratE programme, with tailored support for established but early stage, ambitious enterprises looking to scale and grow
- Continue and expand our Women and Youth Enterprise pre-start coaching
- Deliver an annual programme of enterprise sessions aimed at offering the knowledge and practical skills to help enterprises to thrive and grow as well as inspiring and connecting participants
- Deliver a series of CreaTech showcase events to help network creative entrepreneurs
- Continue to work with Tech Scaler to support delivery in the South of Scotland

In Collaboration...

- Further align and strengthen strategic partnerships to enhance the South of Scotland entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Develop and launch the Hawick Business Centre including a series of programmes to support businesses and enterprises across the Scottish Borders to reach their potential
- Work with SRUC to create an entrepreneurial campus within the region focussed on unlocking the potential of the South's natural capital
- Explore AI, Robotics and Automation opportunities with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Island Enterprise, looking for opportunities to drive digital entrepreneurship across our rural geography
- Launch the South of Scotland Screen Strategy and identify and deliver the actions needed to achieve its ambitions
- 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
- Work with Converge, to support more businesses in the South of Scotland to innovate

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

South of Scotland Creative Economy Guide and Campaign

Amongst our region's biggest asset is our people and communities, with the South of Scotland boasting an incredibly supportive ecosystem of creative thinkers and doers.

Just one example of this is our Creative Economy where there is over 6,000 people in more than 1,800 enterprises engaged in driving the creative industries forward. These enterprises stretch from coast to coast, creating a real community that encourages innovation, collaboration and opportunity at every step.

To raise awareness of the significant potential of the Creative Economy in the region, we launched, in September 2023, the South of Scotland Creative Economy Guide. The guide details the value of the industry – made up of 16 sub-sectors including architecture, crafts, fashion and textiles, film and video, radio and TV, music and writing and publishing – which it estimates to be worth £280million a year to our regional economy.

To coincide with the launch of the guide, we also launched our 'Creative Superheroes' campaign to showcase that our Creative Economy is our superpower.

Our efforts are helping to attract investment and promote opportunities for more people to get into and establish creative enterprises.



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 2024-25

As SOSE...

- Ensure tailored assistance which enables more of our enterprises to innovate remains a core part of our support offer
- 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
- Continue to lead work on the Borderlands and nationally significant Mountain Bike Innovation Centre and Trail Lab at Innerleithen
- Promote the manufacturing sector in the South through participation in the Scottish Government's Senior Leadership Group and Making Scotland's Future Programme Board
- Develop a proactive and tailored support offering to improve profitability and productivity for regional manufacturers, aided by the launch of a new £100,000 Work Smarter Fund
- Continue to implement our Digital Strategy, drive digital adoption and improve the region's digital maturity, highlighting new technology through our pop-up enterprise sessions and Hawick Business Centre
- Launch a second CreaTech fund, making £100,000 available to help unlock potential and drive innovation across creative industries
- Continue work to embed the Circular Economy across all our client engagement and support, identifying key regional and sectoral circular opportunities to proactively develop, driving favourable conditions for related practices and behaviours to flourish
- Recognise and promote the role of the circular bioeconomy in accelerating and aligning key regional industries

In Collaboration...

- Develop and launch a strategic framework as a focus for strengthening alignment and maximising the impact of Innovate UK support within Scotland
- Stimulate innovation focussed collaborations, working with Scotland's National Innovation Centres and other relevant partners
- Secure investment to deliver an Adventure Bike Park in parallel to the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre
- Support delivery 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 Digital Dairy Chain for local supply chains
- Work with Scotland 5GCentre to articulate and better promote the benefits of and support available to pursue advanced connectivity solutions, including supporting the delivery of the Borderlands led Innovative 5G Regions Projects
- Promote the refreshed Intellectual Property Office offer and raise awareness of the support available to protect intellectual business assets within the region

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

Digital Enterprise Workshops

As part of our Enterprise Sessions initiative, we have delivered several digital-themed workshops and presentations across the region, responding to evidenced need and demand and covering topics including 'Raising your Business Profile Online', 'Search Engine Optimisation', and 'An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence'.

Our sessions are aimed at enterprises of all levels of digital maturity, with each theme broken down into simple elements, and related back to positive business outcomes. This allows for topics of varying complexity to be discussed and understood in a safe and encouraging forum.

At the conclusion of each session, attendees have the option of further engagement with us, including access to tailored one-to-one support from our Digital Development Specialist. Our one-to-many workshops and presentations are proving a great starting point to reach a wide audience, before filtering down into bespoke support and guidance for those enterprises who are further along their own digital journey.

Our efforts are ensuring we are directly supporting enterprises to accelerate their digitalisation and in turn increase resilience, productivity, efficiency, and profitability – helping the region to catch up in an area where evidence tells us we lag behind compared to the rest of Scotland.



Our Key Enabling Activities Across 2024/25

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 and Fair Work; Showcase the South as a place to invest; Encourage people to contact us no matter what stage of their journey they're at, and Enhance and protect SOSE's reputation
- Be proactive in promoting news stories and case studies to help inspire others and encourage people to contact us
- Develop creative approaches to using social media to further raise our profile and increase engagement
- Deliver a programme of business support drop in events at a range of locations across the South of Scotland, increasing the visibility of and accessibility to our business advisors
- 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
- Collaborate with partners regionally and nationally to extend our reach and amplify the profile of SOSE and the region nationally and internationally

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

- 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 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
- Contribute to the public reform agenda, embracing opportunities to pilot new approaches

Continued on next page...

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

- Deliver effective Regional Economic Partnership meetings supported by 'Team South of Scotland' and the Regional Economic Partnership Secretariat
- Provide leadership and capacity to help drive progress against the refreshed Delivery Plan priorities, including the three main challenges of housing, transport and skills
- Lead the development of the REP Communications Strategy working with key partners to showcase the work of the REP and the impact of their work
- Chair and support the work of the South of Scotland Education and Skills Strategic Coordination Group (ESSCG)
- Ensure that the Convention of the South of Scotland focuses on key issues in the South of Scotland, shaping agendas and driving actions

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

- Run a regular business survey and share outputs and information with partners
- 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

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

- Support the refresh of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation including identification and delivery of priority transformational projects
- Respond to consultations and participate as members of key national groups including Industry Leadership Groups
- Engage with Scottish Government and UK Government to ensure perspectives of the South of Scotland and our strengths are better understood

Continued on next page...

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

Driving continuous improvement across all that we do

- Deliver a Continuous Improvement Strategy focussed on the delivery of evidence driven Best Value, utilising our resources for the most impactful outcomes for the South of Scotland through a high-performance culture underpinned by wellbeing, continuous growth through learning and development and smarter ways of working
- Launch and implement MySOSE, a new Customer Relationship Management system
- Draw on the learning from the evaluation of our inclusion in the Scottish Governments 4 Day 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

- Build upon our primary measures and existing data collection to establish our 'supporting measures' and devise related targets
- Lead partnership work to develop and put in place a performance measurement framework for the Regional Economic Strategy
- Support Implementation of Scottish Government's National Innovation Strategy with delivery of quarterly reporting

Performance Measurement Framework

We launched our Performance Measurement Framework in 2023, including new systems and processes allowing us to assess and monitor the effectiveness of our delivery, aligned to each of our six As.

Across the past year (2023/24) our efforts have been focussed on establishing a baseline and capturing data for all client facing, approved funding projects against our Primary Measures. This approach will be built upon across the year ahead to incorporate Supporting Measures and devise related targets.

Measures of our organisational performance and direct impact include:

Primary Measures:

align to our six areas of strategic focus – Our six As. We have set out our primary measures within this Operating Plan under each of the As in the preceding tables.

Supporting Measures:

delve deeper into our six As and/or represent prioritised areas of performance and impact

Tracking Wider Impacts:

regional-level economic, social, and environmental performance indicators

Evaluation Capability:

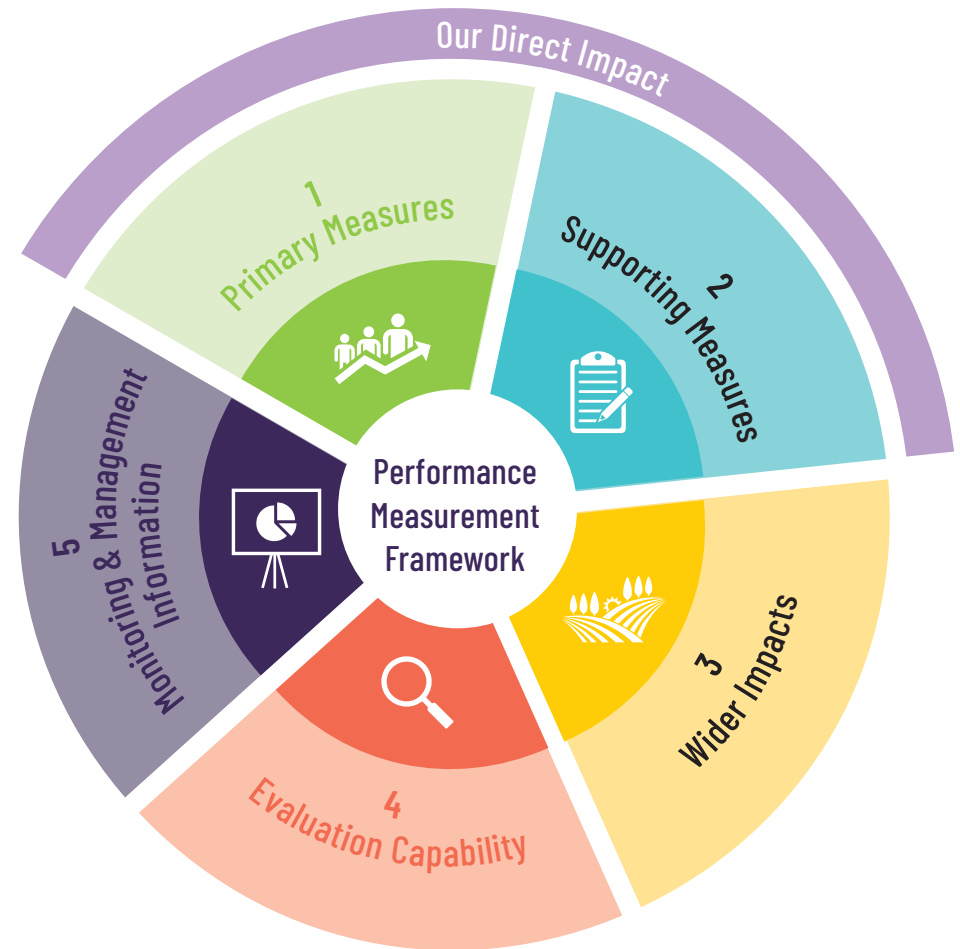
to enable in-depth evaluations of specific areas of work

Management Information and monitoring processes:

to track projects are delivering as planned and ensure we are operating effectively

Our Primary Measures are a 'best fit'. They balance what we want to measure with what is, currently at least, feasible to measure and what we are able to develop robust target ranges for. We expect our direct impact to positively influence the performance of the South of Scotland as a whole, which is why our framework will also monitor change at a wider level.

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



Annexes

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Appendix A

Our Organisation

As an organisation we are 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.

As of 31 March 2024 there are **140 employees** in SOSE.



Jane Morrison-Ross
Chief Executive, South of Scotland Enterprise



Allan Harrow
Interim Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

- Facilities & Office
- Fair Work & Equality
- Finance & Audit
- HR & Information Governance
- IT & Digital
- Procurement & Legal
- Programme Management
- Risk & Compliance

30 Employees



Dr Martin Valenti
Director of Net Zero, Nature and Entrepreneurship

- Net Zero Transition
- Energy Transition
- Attracting Net Zero Investment
- Natural Capital & Investment
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Entrepreneurship

27 Employees



Karen Jackson
Director of Strategy, Partnership & Engagement

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

23 Employees



Anthony Daye
Acting Director of Place and Enterprise (Substantive post – Director of Finance and Corporate Resources)

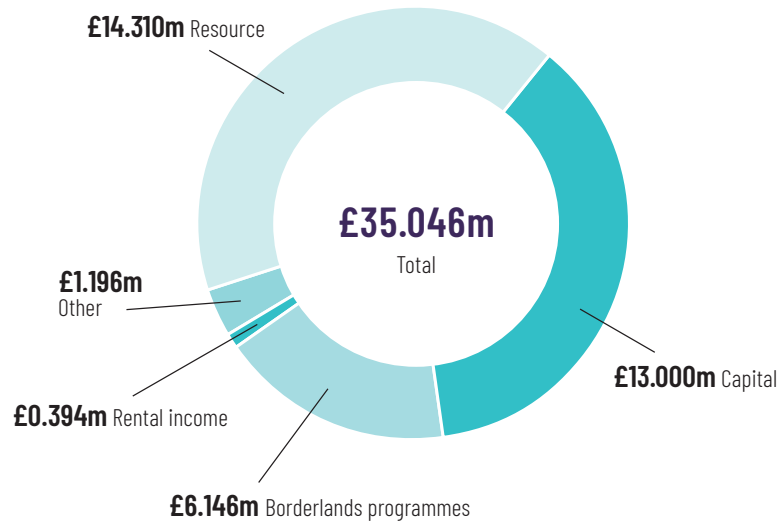
- Enterprising Business
- Enterprising Communities
- Economic Infrastructure
- Performance Measurement and Pipelines

60 Employees

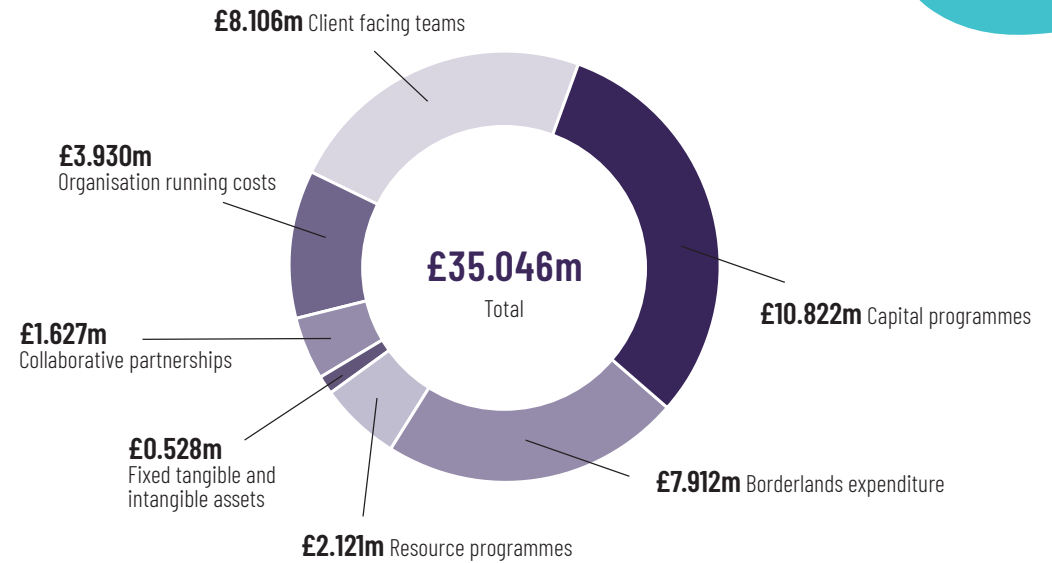
Appendix B

Our Operating Budget for 2024/25

Income



Expenditure



Note:

- The 2024/25 South of Scotland Enterprise budget cash allocation was £27.310m the cash position is reflected in the above; the overall budget for SOSE is £27.364m which includes other elements relating to administration and non-cash items.
- Collaborative Partnerships with other strategic bodies include finance, IT and HR support.
- Organisation running costs includes all remaining staff costs outwith the Client Facing Teams, and other business and estates costs.

Contact Us

Find out more at

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

0300 304 8888

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

Correct as of June 2024

