

CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

OUTCOMES – 28 SEPTEMBER 2020

Outcome 1 - COVID-19 - Regional Economic Impacts and Supporting Recovery

The Convention welcomed and endorsed the paper on economic recovery, specifically highlighting that the priorities identified align to the Convention's own view of the crucial areas of focus for economic recovery and the significant ambitions that members have for the South of Scotland.

The Convention recognised the importance of having an approach to economic recovery that engages all local partners to set a strategic direction for the region that reflects the area's particular strengths and challenges, operating in an agile and responsive way to ensure swift, targeted and sustainable interventions that reflect local need and fully engage local communities in their development.

Members highlighted that there needs to be a further increased focus on the opportunities of greater digital capability and accessibility in the region, as a key route to supporting business, education and bolstering the quality of life that attracts people to the South of Scotland as a destination.

A second area of particular focus was on the combined aims of accelerating the South of Scotland's progress towards a net zero transition whilst leveraging the natural capital of the region to position it as a leader in renewable energy development and a centre for green jobs.

There was agreement that significant challenges remain, across many sectors, including tourism but that there is also positivity about the opportunities that the South of Scotland has in forging a sustainable path to economic recovery through renewed partnership and use of the area's natural assets.

Outcome 2 – Workforce and Skills

South of Scotland Enterprise will lead work with SDS and other partners, including Developing the Young Workforce partnerships, to clearly articulate the scale and scope of opportunities within Food and Drink, Engineering and Textiles and other sectors important to the South of Scotland. Working closely with industry groups, we will identify the flexible support needed to drive these forward and explore how we can deliver the support required.

The Regional Economic Partnership, supported by the Team SOS Senior Officer Group, as part of the work they are doing to drive forward the Regional Economic Strategy, should identify a package of measures to support people move into the area and retain young people in the region, involving partners (including the NHS) across the region. The Group could usefully draw on approaches elsewhere including: the Western Isles model; using Foundation Apprenticeships as a pathway to careers in the local economy; and deploying group training models such as East Kilbride Group Training (engineering) to see how they could be adapted to fit the needs of the rural South of Scotland.

Outcome 3 – Tourism in the South of Scotland

The Convention confirmed the importance of the tourism sector to the future of the region, and the devastating impact the Covid-19 crisis was having on tourism businesses. The Convention commissioned senior officers and the South of

CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

Scotland Destination Alliance to work collaboratively to consider how the recommendations from the national Scottish Tourism Task Force can complement existing or new activity in the south - through transport, digital capability, skills development and investment plans - to create new opportunities for sustainable recovery and longer term inclusive low carbon growth.

Members agreed to work closely with national organisations on actions to stimulate demand through a targeted marketing campaign, to provide businesses with support to retain employees and build capacity to achieve longer term growth targets, to identify new low carbon projects and initiatives which showcase the South of Scotland's natural assets and strengths.

Outcome 4 – Community Wealth Building

The Convention discussed the opportunities community wealth building (CWB) presents for the region, particularly the offer from Scottish Government to work alongside local partners to produce a CWB action plan for the area.

Noting the need to drive inclusive economic opportunity and grow the working age population, members recognised the growth opportunity presented by increased access to public and private sector contracts for the large SME base in the South of Scotland, and the associated supply chain development benefits. They also discussed the central commitment to Fair Work practice and the small family firms, independent business, and community energy which already exists in the region as being a good basis on which to build any CWB activity.

Highlighting that seemingly small scale interventions can have a huge impact on outcomes experienced by communities, a number of options for how CWB could be taken forward in the region emerged: 1) doing more to identify and profile what is happening already (across 5 pillars) to scale that activity where possible; 2) embed 5 community wealth building principles across emerging plans for SOSE and its operations to shape the type of support offered and the nature of growth activity; 3) specifically work with a local council/s as anchor organisations and prioritise activity that could be delivered across the 5 pillars (akin to the North Ayrshire approach); and 4) explore taking a sectoral CWB approach via, for example, housing or education.

Partners agreed outline ideas were a good basis on which to develop a CWB action plan for the area, and Scottish Government should now work with local partners to produce an action plan and report on delivery progress at next CoSS in 2021.