

1. Name of SOA case study

Scottish Borders (New Ways) Community Planning Partnership – Responding to the Economic Downturn

2. What was the local need addressed by this SOA case study?

- The need for partners in the Scottish Borders to work together to understand the impact of the economic downturn
- The need to engage the business community in this process
- The need to respond as a partnership and to deliver actions to support the Borders economy in deteriorating economic conditions

Low average earnings, over-dependence on a narrow range of sectors (many of which continue to decline) and GVA per employee significantly below the national average are conditions that partners are acutely aware of, especially in the current economic downturn.

3. What was done – and by which partners?

The Competitive Borders theme within our community planning structure has been proactive in engaging with businesses over the last few months. As a partnership and as individual agencies, a number of key events have taken place, and initiatives undertaken, ensuring that the public sector is responding as effectively as possible to the current conditions and is preparing for economic recovery, and is listening to businesses on an ongoing basis:

- **Competitive Borders wider stakeholder meetings:**
 - November- focus on SBCs Economic Resilience Action Plan, which now incorporates many of the key issues raised at the meeting by a diverse range of partners
 - June- focus on Skills- current and future requirements of businesses, and the role of new Scottish Borders Campus in Galashiels
 - May and August- involvement of stakeholders in Jim Mather “Mind-mapping” sessions
 - October 2009- sectoral focus - Textiles
- **New Ways Economic Summit** – held in December 2008 – business leaders from across the Public/Private sectors came together to discuss the economic recession and its implications for the Borders
- **Rural Funding Road Show** – held in February 2009- co-ordinated by SBC, and in partnership with Business Gateway, the Scottish Government, and the voluntary sector, with the aim of increasing the number of applications to funding sources (SRDP, Leader, South of Scotland etc). Helped identify barriers that may be preventing businesses and groups applying. Stand taken at Borders Union Agricultural Show in July to follow up.
- **Scottish Enterprise Downturn Reviews** completed with all account managed customers in the Borders during Oct / Nov 08

and thereafter every 6months

- **“Now’s the Time to Ask” Campaign and events** – held beginning of December with approx 120 attendees. Speakers covered topics on innovation, getting the most out of employees, marketing etc. Arranged by SE as part of downturn response but linked with partners (SBC, BG, Chambers etc)
- **“Winning through Innovation” events** – held during March 09 with over 100 attendees. High level of enquiries resulting in new series of local workshops being delivered in July / August at Borders College to help businesses build capacity and promote knowledge transfer
- **PACE support** – partnership approach by agencies at various venues across the region in response to large scale redundancies
- **Media Engagement** – monthly feature in the local newspaper (Southern Reporter) to encourage more balanced media representation of economic downturn and response/activity by public sector partners
(<http://www.scottishbordersnewways.com/public/projects/economicrecovery.htm>)
- **Economic Intelligence** – proactive sharing of intelligence gathered between partners
- **Amendment of Business Gateway contract-** to cover not only start-ups but support for micro businesses
- **Key Events Attraction-** co-ordinated planning, development and promotion of some large scale, high impact events over the summer e.g. 48 hours in... Jedburgh and Kelso, Tour of Britain
- **Creative Clusters project**, recognising the growth potential in this sector (Rates of self-employment are rising, indicating ongoing strength in entrepreneurial activity)
- **Supplier Development Programme-** providing procurement support for Borders businesses, especially important in a small business environment
- **Local Economic Strategy refresh-** Competitive Borders theme now concentrating its efforts on updating our strategy to reflect changes in the economy, partner agencies/structures/roles, and to reflect some of the large projects coming on stream, as well as linking clearly to SOA outcomes

4. What is the evidence of the benefits for communities – or if the benefits are still to be delivered, what is the timeline for that?

- To date, feedback from customers and partners about activities and pace of response by public sector has been positive
- Attendance at business engagement events has been very good
- The amendment of Business Gateway contract has resulted in increased volume of 1: 1 assistance provided (the ultimate measure will be business survival)

As well as monitoring the PIs in the SOA, the benefits to the business community will be measured in the coming 12 months in the following ways:

- efficient dissemination of information on business funding via Business Gateway will be measured by money distributed in the area
- Local events - additional product development being assessed via follow up surveys of business participants - e.g. Jedburgh Tattoo, Tour of Britain etc
- SBC Supplier Development Programme- success will be measured by the number of businesses registered- baseline data being asked for against which we will measure £ & number of public sector contracts won
- Tourism impact - visitor numbers and spend
- Creative Clusters - again being base-lined in terms of number of businesses and value to economy

5. What added value has the SOA process brought to the delivery of these benefits?

- Has ensured that all partners are considering the impact of the economic downturn in relation to their activities and across the wider partnership
- Has allowed a balanced debate taking account of the short-medium term issues faced as a result of the economic downturn but keeping in mind the longer term aims for development of the Borders economy
- Scrutiny of performance indicators relating to the economy.

6. What next steps are you taking to meet this local need?

- Ongoing monitoring and updating of SBC Economic Resilience Action Plan
- Ongoing SE Downturn response activities

- Competitive Borders Group to take a sectoral approach to maximise benefit of stakeholder engagement at future meetings
- Scottish Borders Business Excellence Awards to launch in October 2009, to showcase business success across 7 categories.

Contact details of lead officer.

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