

## Place Promotion and Housing Delivery in the South of Scotland



### Context

Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) have Local Housing Strategies and Local Development Plans in place and key partners are working closely to make sure communities have access to the homes they need. The vision for housing across the South of Scotland aligns with and supports key local, regional and national visions for housing and the economy.

There is a vast housing land supply across the South of Scotland, however recent delivery remains low due to several reasons including the loss of SME housebuilders, fewer national developers, infrastructure costs and shortage of labour and skills. Cumulatively, these factors have resulted in a decline in housing delivery across the South of Scotland in recent years, with both Councils declaring housing emergencies. More homes are needed in the South of Scotland to grow the local economy and to support the ambition for a wellbeing economy.

This case study provides an example of collaborative, partnership working across SBC, D&G, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and a range of key stakeholders, to produce the [Housing Action Plan](#) for the South of Scotland.

## What Happened

Housing was identified as a key challenge by the [Regional Economic Partnership \(REP\)](#) when it launched the Regional Economic Strategy in 2021. As a result, housing was identified as a priority for the REP and a Strategic Action Group on Housing was established, in partnership with SOSE, D&G and SBC, along with key stakeholders.

In response to the current housing emergency, both D&G and SBC, in partnership with SOSE, produced a Housing Action Plan for the region. The Plan sets out ten actions that will be taken forward, with the aim of creating more homes and more choice of homes where they are needed across the region.

This partnership is focussed on unlocking more homes where they are needed, this requires bold action and a commitment from all partners to play their part. The Strategic Action Group on Housing launched the Housing Action Plan for the South of Scotland in July 2024, setting out ten actions. The actions include both immediate steps to stimulate interest and opportunities, as well as creating the conditions for long-term transformation. The Housing Action Plan sits alongside various workstreams underway across the South of Scotland and beyond, to address the urgent need for more homes. The Plan is dynamic, and the group remain proactive in seizing new opportunities and ideas as they emerge to keep the plan relevant and responsive.

The Plan sets out that in creating the right homes in the right places for our communities, this will:

- Support our economy to grow and thrive.
- Underpin the exciting investment happening in the region.
- Attract new people to boost our working age population.
- Allow our young people who want to stay and work in the South of Scotland to do so, rather than moving elsewhere.
- Enable us to keep delivering vital services such as health and social care.

The actions are targeted where they can add to existing work, such as Local Housing Strategies and Local Development Plans, and where the group can create extra momentum to realise the collective ambitions for the region. The actions are focussed on addressing the economic drivers and levers of housing – creating the homes we need to enable economic growth and maximising the economic benefit from investing in new homes.



## Areas of Collaboration

Through the production of the Housing Action Plan, a broad range of people and organisations involved in housing were engaged with, including:

- Agents and Architects
- Communities
- Developers
- Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway staff
- Regional Economic Partnership (REP)
- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- Registered social landlords
- South of Scotland Community Housing
- Infrastructure providers
- Landowners.

## Overall Result

The ten actions set out within the Housing Action Plan are:

1. Develop and run a targeted marketing campaign to reach those in the construction sector who want to start up, grow or innovate in the South of Scotland – helping us to connect with and directly support more enterprises to do so.
2. Support and shape work to develop proposals to significantly increase construction skills provision in the region, identifying barriers and opportunities and complementing wider regional skills planning.
3. Develop partnership projects bringing together community organisations, our Registered Social Landlords, South of Scotland Community Housing and others to co-develop schemes that create more homes.
4. Scope the feasibility and develop plans to create new student and key worker accommodation, including an emerging project in Dumfries but also looking for opportunities across the region.
5. Develop and launch a promotional prospectus to showcase demand for homes in the South of Scotland, underpinned by evidence of our regional ambition and investment and communicating that we are a region that is up for growth and open for business.
6. Develop a range of content to explain the need for and benefits of new homes to raise awareness and confidence among partners, decision makers and communities.
7. Bringing a South of Scotland lens to shape regional and national planning reform, including seeking to pilot new approaches and supporting work to grow capacity.



8. Explore more innovative and effective ways to share and communicate key data as we develop local housing land pipelines, including as part of work to promote housing development opportunities across the region.
9. Scope innovative funding and financing approaches to unlock more development at all scales, including the upfront barriers to development.
10. Review and scope funding options across the public sector to respond to regional housing opportunities.

The actions are focussed on those areas where the group can help create the homes the economy needs in the South of Scotland. The actions are tangible in areas where members of the REP can add real value to the important work already happening to support housing delivery across the South of Scotland. The intention is not to duplicate but seek to add impact, with a focus on the economic drivers for and economic benefits of more homes.

The actions are targeted where they can have an immediate effect over a two-year period (July 2024 – July 2026). Some of these actions have either already been implemented or are currently underway.

Through the Housing Action Plan, there is a commitment to action and taking immediate steps to stimulate interest in and opportunities for development, as well as creating the conditions for long-term transformation.

The initial focus has been on deepening our understanding of the issues and identifying practical actions to create more homes in the South of Scotland. The partnership is very much focussed on putting these actions into practice and each action identifies a lead(s) who are responsible for coordinating activity. The REP continues to have strategic oversight of this work and receives quarterly updates on progress against the actions.

One of the publications has been in relation to action 5 – which saw the launch of a [Housing Prospectus for the South of Scotland](#) in June 2025. The Prospectus highlights the opportunities for growth in the South of Scotland, recent investment, opportunities as being a renewable and natural capital powerhouse and the development opportunities within both Local Authority areas.

## Lessons Learned

**Collaborative/Partnership working:** The collaborative and partnership approach has been a driver for a proactive and strategic approach to housing delivery, through the Housing Action Plan. Having already spoken with a broad range of people, organisations and developers in producing the Action Plan, it is acknowledged that moving forward there will be further new opportunities and ideas which emerge. Through working collaboratively across the South of Scotland, we aim to succeed in making the area a great place to build homes and invest in.

**Local Authority Joint Working:** A number of the actions require both Local Authorities to work together in partnership. This is providing a range of opportunities for sharing information, best



practice and thinking about new ways of working collaboratively. This includes action 8 in developing a local housing land pipeline.

**Opportunities for others:** Through publishing the Housing Action Plan and taking forward the actions, this has provided a template/model, should other local authorities wish to do something similar across Scotland.

## Related Links

[South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership \(REP\)](#)

[South of Scotland Housing Action Plan](#)

[A Housing Prospectus for the South of Scotland](#)

[Key Worker Homes in the South of Scotland](#)

[Construction Campaign](#)

[Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2024](#)

[Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2019](#)

[Scottish Borders Council Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#)

[Dumfries and Galloway Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030](#)

*This case study has been prepared in collaboration by Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway, South of Scotland Enterprise and the National Planning Improvement Team at the Improvement Service. We publish good practice case studies identified through our work on the National Planning Improvement Framework and the National Planning Hub. They aim to support the sharing of good practice and build collaboration across the sector in addressing common challenges. Please email us at [npi@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:npi@improvementservice.org.uk) if your authority has a good practice case study to share.*

