

Scottish Borders Council Response to NPF4 Call for Ideas

A. Introduction

This document is the response of Scottish Borders Council to the Scottish Government's 'Call for Ideas' on the emerging National Planning Framework 4.

The NPF is a long term spatial plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable inclusive growth.

Specifically, NPF4 will set out a spatial expression of Scottish Government's economic strategy and infrastructure investment plans through to 2050.

Critically, it must also take account of the urgent and accelerating threats of climate change, and biodiversity and ecosystems loss.

For the Scottish Borders (as for every other part of Scotland) understanding and responding effectively to the challenges and opportunities we face is about place. This requires an appreciation of the context and character of the region, and the interrelationship of issues and places which present in the challenges and opportunities experienced by the region and its people.

It is also important to recognise that the Scottish Borders both has vital relationships with other regions beyond its legal boundaries, and forms a part or sub-region within a number of wider regions. These include:

The South of Scotland – Due to commence its formal operation from 1st April 2020, Scottish Government has established a new non-departmental public body called South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), which will operate in the local authority areas of the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. The overarching aims of SOSE will be to drive inclusive growth and ensure the region benefits from a new approach that supports a diverse and resilient economy, sustains and grows communities, and harnesses the potential of people and resources.

Southern Scotland – Southern Scotland is a NUTS2 designation for the purposes of allocating EU and post-EU Exit funding. It comprises six local authority areas: Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and Scottish Borders. Based upon GDP, Southern Scotland constitutes the UK's poorest region with a regional GDP of 63.7% of the EU average.

Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal – comprising the local authority authorities of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders, together with regional universities, colleges and the private sector, is a mechanism for accelerating growth by pulling in significant government investment. The local authority partners within the City Deal have agreed and will submit a collective response to the NPF4 Call for Ideas.

Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal – With a focus on ways to make the area more attractive to investors, visitors and those who may wish to come and live here, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal brings together the five cross-

border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the inclusive economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England border.

These entities may be seen as a series of overlapping rings, across which the Council and partners must work in order to leverage maximum benefit for the Scottish Borders. In character and make-up, the Scottish Borders shares much with its rural neighbour, Dumfries and Galloway, with Southern Scotland and with its rural Borderlands partners, but it is essential also that it garners benefit from the economic dynamism of the region of which Edinburgh is the centre.

It follows that, while setting out the distinctiveness of the Scottish Borders and the need for an approach, which is sensitive and responsive to the needs of our region as a place, this document repeats the Council's endorsement of the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal partners' response to the Call for Ideas.

This document proceeds by way of setting out briefly the particular context of the Scottish Borders before going to address the questions raised by Scottish Government in its 'Call for Ideas'.

B. Context

i. Geography and Demography

The Scottish Borders comprises 4,732 square kilometres, and is home to 115,270 people, making it the 6th largest and 7th most sparsely populated council area in Scotland (at 24 people per square km). Using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016, the Scottish Borders is characterised as a rural area, having only 5 settlements with a population in excess of 5,000.

The rural nature of the Scottish Borders is one of our biggest assets with the quality of our natural environment and the quality of our landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area. This is augmented by excellent access to open space, from lochs to sweeping valleys, rolling hills and dramatic coast.

Yet, the area suffers from a significant out-migration of young people and shrinking workforce – between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of 16 to 64 years olds fell by 4%, and the proportion of the population defined as “working age” decreased from 63% in 2007 to 59% in 2018. By contrast, the number of older people continues to grow with the number of over 65s having grown by 25% over the same period; worsening the region's dependency ratio which at 69.21 is significantly higher than the Scottish level of 55.71 (2018).

ii. Economic Activity

The Scottish Borders is part of the new Southern Scotland NUTS2 designation, together with Dumfries and Galloway, South Lanarkshire and the three Ayrshire council areas. Southern Scotland has the lowest GVA per head of any NUTS2 area in UK. GVA in the Scottish Borders for 2018 was £1.6 billion or £13,604 per head of population, the 2nd lowest of the 21 NUTS3 areas in Scotland.

Weekly wages for full-time workers are significantly below the national median of £542.9. (2018). The median weekly wage for all full-time workers in the Scottish Borders was £462.7, making it 31st out of Scotland's Local Authorities.

Relatively high proportions of the workforce area are engaged in agriculture and retail, while relatively lower proportions than the national average are engaged in higher value sectors such as information and communication, and finance and insurance.

iii. Housing

With regards to tenure; 62% of households in the Borders are of owner occupation, 14% are living in the private rented sector and 24% in the social housing sector. These figures are similar to that of Scotland with approximately the same proportion of owner occupation. However the Borders has a lower number of social rented households and a higher proportion of privately rented properties.

A warm, dry, affordable home that meets people's need should be viewed as a basic human right and unfortunately too many people are living in homes that fail to meet this need. Many young people leave home facing significant disadvantages in access to housing but also to education, training and jobs as a result; too many families live in homes that are cold, difficult to heat or damp; and too many older people or those with disabilities have to live in homes that limit their opportunities to participate in society/homes that add to the challenges that their health or disability bring rather than reducing it.

Housing should be seen as a key part of our social and physical infrastructure, fundamental to the wellbeing of families and communities, the functioning of our economy and central to creating a fairer more equitable region in the Borders (and across Scotland) and, therefore, must be a fundamental consideration in the development of NPF4.

There is also good evidence that the benefits of growing and investing in the social rented sector extends well beyond the housing sector: supporting better outcomes and reduce costs to Health and other services. It is imperative that the NPF supports the development of new affordable housing and this should be prioritised through the planning system over the delivery of larger scale market housing.

iv. Inequality

The degree of inequality in rural areas like the Scottish Borders can be overlooked: with the sparsely populated nature of our region, obscuring the extent of deprivation as measured by SIMD. The Borders does have areas of particular challenge though: 6% of data-zones in the Borders are in the 20% most deprived data-zones in Scotland (typically concentrated in the larger towns), while almost a quarter of the Borders data-zones are part of the 40% most deprived in Scotland. A recent Scottish Government report entitled 'Children in families with limited resources 2014 - 2016' showed that 24% of children in the Scottish Borders live in families with limited resources. In other

words, a much greater proportion of families is at risk of deprivation than for comparable rural areas.

v. Energy

The Scottish Borders is a significant net generator of renewable (wind) energy, and in December 2019 it had renewable energy capacity of 909MW.

While a significant amount of energy production takes place in the region, it should also be recognised that there are significant challenges in relation to fuel poverty in the Borders. In the Scottish Borders, 31% of households are in fuel poverty, with 8% living in extreme fuel poverty (Scottish House Condition Survey). This is in comparison with 27% in Scotland living in fuel poverty and 8% living in extreme fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is exacerbated by a number of specific factors affecting properties and households in Scottish Borders, including: a larger proportion of dwellings built before 1945, the rurality of the Scottish Borders - meaning more dwellings are off gas, a larger percentage of older households and a low wage economy.

vi. Transport/Travel to Work

Transport is an issue which has been highlighted as a key challenge by communities across the Scottish Borders. The Borders has a number of trunk roads and arterial routes, which are entirely single carriageway. Rail services were restored to the Scottish Borders in 2015, when the Borders Railway was completed to Tweedbank, and reopening of Reston Station on the East Coast Mainline is also being taken forward.

Public Transport is a particular challenge in the Borders. With increasing operating costs, and pressures on public sector budgets, more and more services have been reduced or cut altogether. This has affected journeys between key towns and throughout the region. As a result, car usage in the Borders has remained high, and the energy consumption for transport grew faster than the national average from 2005-2017. Travel to work by car is higher in the Borders than Scotland as a whole, while travelling to work by bus is 1/3 of the national level.

vii. Digital Connectivity

The rurality of the Scottish Borders has been a challenge also for Digital Connectivity, where provision of Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage has lagged behind more urban areas.

Key investments in Broadband Infrastructure have made important strides in the provision of Superfast Broadband, with 85% of households in the Borders now able to access superfast broadband speeds. This, however, remains behind the Scottish level of 92% of households.

In relation to Mobile Phone Coverage there is a similar disparity in provision. 83% of the geographic area of the Borders has 4G coverage from at least one operator, and only 52% has 4G coverage from all operators. Indeed 8% of the geographic area in the Borders has no mobile coverage at all. It is unclear when any 5G coverage will be available. There is a need to ensure the UK

Government's Shared Rural Network proposals with mobile network operators develops comprehensive coverage for the Scottish Borders.

viii. Environmental Context

This is one of our biggest assets with the quality of our natural environment and the quality of our landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area and an important 'pull factor' in attracting business investment and visitors to the area.

The region has 6 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), 9 Special Areas of conservation (SACs), 95 SSSI, one national nature reserve and two National Scenic Areas. There are 121 Local Wildlife Sites and 9 Special Landscape Areas.

The Scottish Borders also has a larger 'carbon sink' than the Scottish average – due to its large forestry stocks and important areas of peatland- blanket bog, raised bogs and fens, and has a vital role to play in Scotland's developing efforts to naturally offset CO2 pollution. In addition, CO2 emissions in the Borders are roughly half that of the Scottish average.

ix. Cultural Heritage

The Scottish Borders has an outstanding built heritage. Within the area there are 3,740 different protected sites, of which 2,970 (79.4%) are Listed Buildings and 736 (19.7%) are scheduled monuments. There are also a number of Garden and Designed Landscapes, and Battlefields. Conversely, there are 147 buildings registered with Registers of Scotland as being 'at risk'.

C. NPF4 and the Scottish Borders

Before we turn our attention to the 5 questions posed by Scottish Government in its 'Call for Ideas', we wish to make a number of overarching points.

NPF4 should be designed to drive specific outcomes. In the view of the Council, these outcomes should include the following:-

- Inclusive Economic Growth/Inclusive Economy - Not only should our citizens more equitably enjoy the fruits of growth, but all should have the opportunity to participate in an economy which provides equitable reward.
- Sustainable Development - It's a commonplace to refer to 'sustainable inclusive growth', but it must be emphasised that it is not only inclusive growth which need be sustainable, but all our behaviours.
- Improving Wellbeing – Closely related to principles of inclusive economy and sustainable development, 'wellbeing' underpins the national performance framework as the essential measure of improvements in quality of life, material conditions and sustainability. NPF4 should make express reference to the National Performance Framework, and the goal of improving wellbeing.

As noted in the introduction, strategic planning must also be pluralist, recognising that the Scottish Borders looks in different directions, connects to

different places and plays into different agendas. It is an essential premise of this response that regional strategic planning must not only allow but actively support planning across a number of regional contexts and strategic relationships. For the Scottish Borders, this means garnering benefit from participation in the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership and the work of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency, from involvement in the South of Scotland, and from its involvement within the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal – to tackle place-based challenges and make the most of opportunities, which are particular to the Scottish Borders.

D. The Five Questions

1. What development will we need to address climate change?

i. Alignment between national ambition and regional/local planning

Much greater clarity is required from Scottish Government on the correlation between national ambitions and local delivery. If the Scottish Borders, indeed, all parts of Scotland, are to meet the climate challenge, there must be clear alignment between responsibilities/plans/delivery at the local and regional levels and national emissions inventories and emission reduction plans. Without this, the risks of failing to deliver against ambitious national targets are substantially increased.

ii. Land use

Land use currently accounts for around one third of current carbon emissions in Scotland. The Council considers that there is a need to build on the Land Use Strategy 2016 – 2021 and particularly the work which emerged from Land Use Pilots undertaken in Aberdeenshire and the Scottish Borders. This will help us understand relationship between issues such as woodland creation, peatland restoration, natural flood management, improving biodiversity and habitat protection by planning land use at the strategic level, vital to delivering the necessary reduction in carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions at scale.

The Scottish Borders has an important role to play in the national effort around woodland creation as a mitigation of carbon emissions. However, local/regional efforts must be designed and developed within the framework of a clear national approach, and Scottish Government needs to make progress with this agenda urgently. An example of what is possible is found in Scottish Government's work with Scottish Forestry, Scottish Borders Council and other local authorities in the South of Scotland to pilot a regional strategic approach to explore opportunities for new woodlands based on integrated land use and a focus on delivery of multiple benefits including opportunities for employment, business, infrastructure, nature based solutions and community involvement. However, extra woodland creation must not be seen simply as something which happens in regions like the Scottish Borders in a response to national and international requirements. Following the principles of a Just Transition, it must bring added value to the region through, for example, increased tourism investment in

response to biodiversity gain, and enterprise, growth and skills and training opportunities from commercial woodland.

iii. Prioritisation of biodiversity and net biodiversity gain

Together with climate change, biodiversity loss is one of two existential threats to current life on earth. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) published in May 2019 acknowledges that negative trends in nature will continue to 2050 and beyond in all of the policy scenarios explored in the Report, except those that include the most transformative change – due to the projected impacts of increasing land-use change, exploitation of organisms and climate change, although with significant differences between regions. First, it is the view of the Council that climate change and biodiversity/ecosystems loss must be treated as interrelated issues with the accelerating climate crisis threatening natural ecosystems, and the degradation of ecosystems (such as green and blue carbon sinks) exacerbating net carbon emissions. Public policy in general and spatial and land use development in particular must be designed in a way which constantly prioritises climate change and biodiversity/ecosystems loss, and recognises the dependencies between them. This can be facilitated by strengthening the requirements of national planning policy to have regard to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) including a national ecological network, and through regional delivery of the SBS through Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) e.g. making it a requirement to adopt an up-to-date LBAP, similar to the requirements for a Woodland Strategy under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Second, offsetting the negative impacts of development is a key strategy but should be supplemented by consideration of national mandatory requirements for net biodiversity gain similar to that being progressed in England under the Environment bill. Green infrastructure is an effective tool to combat the impacts of climate change and help people adapt to or to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and the multi-functionality of green infrastructure is key to this contribution. The Green Infrastructure objective should therefore be bolder and more robust, setting out a requirement for green infrastructure as part of all development rather than aspirational, promoting it as a component of place-making.

iv. Market failure and the necessity of national approaches

Where national law or regulatory frameworks are permissive, market failure in regions like the Scottish Borders, (for example, in relation to housing) typically restrains the setting of more ambitious standards. The most effective way of addressing this is to set higher mandatory minimum requirements nationally, which require the whole of industry/market to adjust to standards of universal application. In short, such an approach should apply both to planning law and building regulation.

New builds, and significant refurbishments must be low carbon by design. Fibre to enable home working, charging points for electric vehicles and accessibility to public transport networks should generally be default requirements.

Retrofitting of such measures will be required across the majority of housing stock, business premises which are already in existence. This will require very significant resourcing and also a flexibility of approach, recognising that bringing all properties up to a 'gold standard' will not be practical, but that the standards and expectations that we have all properties and premises must nonetheless be improved.

v. Renewables - Added Value

As noted, the Scottish Borders is a significant net generator of renewable (wind) energy. Regrettably, hoped-for socio-economic benefits to the region have not materialised. This is concerning and disappointing, given that previous energy transitions have been catalysts for sustained periods of national and regional development: coal in the Central Belt; hydropower in the Highlands; and oil and gas in the North East. The permissive nature of community benefit developer contributions has failed to garner significant benefits. The Council believes that delivering benefits for consumers (domestic and business) should be an explicit aim of strategic policy as a counter to market failure and the challenges which emerge from the region's rural context. This should take the form of guaranteeing a resilient and well-integrated regional supply network, and in pricing benefits to consumers. Moreover, there is a need to convert the combination of national decarbonisation ambitions and our local transition assets into employment and enterprise creation within the Green Economy, supported by the development of a training infrastructure, which generates increased socio-economic benefits for our region and the country.

vi. Energy network resilience and capacity

During the currency of NPF4, Scotland's energy system will need to change dramatically in order to deliver Scotland's Energy Strategy targets for renewable energy and energy productivity. Distribution networks will need to be developed which have sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand for distributed generation; for example, in relation to new demands for electric vehicles and a growing number of heat pumps. As a measure of the challenge, recent work commissioned by Glasgow in pursuit of its 2030 net zero carbon target anticipates a requirement for 175,000 electric vehicle charging points. For the Scottish Borders, the issue is less one of critical mass than connectivity and infrastructural resilience. We must have an energy system, which delivers for consumers across a large and economically challenged geographic region, and eliminates all risk of deficiencies in electricity supply exacerbating wider problems of market failure. As per the preceding paragraph on 'Renewables – Added Value', public policy should guarantee the resilience and effectiveness of the regional supply network.

vii. Transport

Strategic planning must recognise and respond to the lack of connectivity and affordable public transport options within the Scottish Borders and across the

region's boundaries, leaving communities disconnected from places of work and opportunity. In response, we must prioritise digital connectivity, but radical improvement in public and low carbon transport options is also needed. Strategic public transport hubs are essential but we need to consider how people get to those hubs and plan for that. This will require installation of thousands of electric vehicle chargers across domestic, commercial and public settings. It will require an integrated and properly resourced public transport system, unachievable without significant central government support.

Extension of the Borders railway has an essential role to play in reducing the number of car journeys between the Borders, other parts of Scotland and Northern England. The connection of all points, including Hawick, between Edinburgh and Carlisle will be transformative in terms of access and will, together with the opening of a new railway station at Reston on the East Coast mainline, mean that the Scottish Borders is directly connected into cross regional rail infrastructures for the first time in many decades.

2. How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?

The answer to this question in the Scottish Borders (as in other places) lies in balancing a number of issues where inherent tensions exist. On the one hand, this means promoting economic growth and vitality in the region using the 'growth corridors' which link prime economic hubs within the Scottish Borders to national infrastructure. These corridors run along our key infrastructural routes: Borders Railway, East Coast Mainline, A1, A7, and A68. Extension of the railway to Carlisle promises to leverage opportunities all along the line throughout the Borders, providing new opportunities to Tweedbank, and offering to open up new growth in Hawick and throughout Teviot and Liddesdale to the English Border. Similarly, the opening of Reston Railway Station will present new opportunities in Berwickshire.

On the other hand, all such initiatives must reflect compliance with the principles of sustainable development. This means that growth is facilitated and supported in ways which are sustainable and that planning fully and explicitly supports this. It also means ensuring that developments enhance rather than detract from those very things, which people so value about the Scottish Borders: its natural environment, its rural character, its function as open air sporting arena (e.g. cycling, fishing or walking). The aim should be to enhance access to these attributes both for residents of the region and people beyond it.

NPF4 must respond to The Scottish Government's commitment to "repopulate our rural, island and coastal communities" and the NPF4 must be developed in a way that appreciates the role that good quality and affordable housing will have in delivering this outcome.

Many people who live in the Scottish Borders are not within reasonable distance of key services (e.g. GPs). Additionally, there is reducing satisfaction with the

quality of the public transport and increasing spend on fuel for cars in rural areas compared to the rest of Scotland.

If ambitions for rural areas are to be successful, there must be stronger links between planning, housing, infrastructure and economic policies. Not only that, but the long-term impact of social housing in reducing poverty, including child poverty, must be clearly understood. For the Planning system in Scotland to support health and wellbeing in our communities, progressive planning policies which clearly support the development of good quality, sustainable housing must be at the heart of the Planning Framework.

Our region has cohesive communities, and a good quality of life, based upon an attractive built heritage in towns, villages, a high quality environment, and strong identity. Development must seek to conserve these benefits, while creating opportunities for innovation, and the bringing in of new economic opportunities.

Active travel has a vital role to play in future providing better safer connections between settlements and within settlements, using the sustainable travel hierarchy. Rural areas provide some significant challenges, but design of networks which promote dedicated cycle routes, and use of electric bikes with appropriate charging opportunities can play an important role.

Ageing population – there is a need for the planning system to think carefully about the ageing population, and how we plan for the needs of older people in a way which is inclusive and sustainable, including maximising opportunities for independent living. It is important that our settlements remain inclusive, but we should also recognise the merits of older people's proximity to services. Repurposing town centres provides one route to address this.

3. What does planning need to do to enable development & investment in our economy to benefit everyone?

As noted in the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal Response to the Call for Ideas, overheating in and around Edinburgh is a challenge. From the Scottish Borders, however, the perspective is not one of overheating, but of ensuring that developments and investments are dispersed across that wider city-region, thereby delivering greater cohesion between the Scottish Borders and other parts of the region. More industrial and commercial space is needed outside the city. As noted, growth corridors provide a logical mechanism for this approach, linking hubs in the Central Borders, in Hawick, and in East Berwickshire with other places in the Scottish Borders and beyond.

Within the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal funding is being used to deliver programmes of investment that are strongly focused on innovation and that link to the Data Driven Innovation Programme. Again, the locations chosen for investment are linked to existing growth corridors by road and by rail to maximise the impact of investment.

We must seek improved distribution of key sectors and jobs and assets - building on the region's core sectoral strengths which include tourism, creative industries, food & drink, and manufacturing. But there is also a very strong need

to attract in new businesses with high skills demands and commensurate pay levels, such as life sciences, data science, tech, finance, fintech.

Tourism dispersal and management – recognising that this also an area of overheating within Edinburgh and within Lake District as part of Borderlands, there is a need to develop clear plans to ensure the visitor economy works as an element of integrated and seamless ecosystems, dispersing visitors from hot spots across the region, and into the Scottish Borders and other places.

Office market dispersal and management – there is an opportunity to spread the benefits regionally from an overheating with limited supply or opportunities for new office space and high levels of productivity to less productive regions reflecting weaknesses in the local business base and commuting travel patterns.

Investing in affordable housing generates significant benefits for the economy. Each new home built in Scotland supports four jobs across the economy and home building in Scotland contributes around £570 million to government finances each year. In addition, the cumulative impact of new affordable homes will raise additional council tax revenue. Investment in housing, and ensuring this investment can be realised in rural areas and support local employment and skills development is critical and planning policy must support this.

4. How can planning improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

The primary challenges to the special character of our places are fundamentally economic in nature. To address them requires precisely the dispersal of opportunities implied within inclusive economic growth and an inclusive economy referred to elsewhere in this report.

At the same time, as noted previously, value must be attached to the attributes whether natural environment or historic public realm, which are representative of those things which give our place its special character. Net biodiversity gain can assist in this respect, as can an ecosystems services approach more broadly.

Town Centres – town centres across our region have experienced huge changes driven by shifts in the way society lives, works and shops. Town Centres are vital to efforts to reduce carbon and deliver sustainable places, and all our region's town centres must work to find a new economic purpose.

- Towns of the future must contemplate a repurposing town centres, moving away from retail and recognising the importance of the Health and Social Care agenda. Minds must also focus on improving properties, using mechanisms like the CARS schemes. Market Failure challenge has got worse, and there is correlation between low incomes and lack of spend in the local economy.
- Simplified Planning Zones and Areas may be an option, moving to Masterplan Consent areas.

5. What infrastructure do we need to plan and build to realise our long term aspirations?

With NPF4, Scottish Borders Council seeks an approach which is relevant to the challenges and opportunities faced by the region over the next decade. There are four particular areas we would highlight if the region is to be able to realise long-term aspirations.

- i. The Scottish Borders must maximise the inclusive economic growth opportunities offered by its indigenous transition assets, such as physical geography. It is essential that the energy networks in the region have the capacity and resilience not merely to respond to demand but to enable the region to secure opportunity and innovation across the energy/renewables sector. This requires working with and influencing suppliers and other partners at both the national and regional level.
Our Ask – Scottish Government must lead and shape this process, and pursue a more structured approach to national and regional development that recognises the complexity of economic challenges and opportunities and which delivers added value to place through development gain, jobs, skills and training.
- ii. The importance of a good housing sector extends beyond individual homes. We need to create communities that are well planned and connected, with green spaces that encourage people to be active outside their home. Doing this has the potential to boost both the economic productivity of our communities through connecting people to employment opportunities and prevent social isolation.
Our Ask – Scottish Government should continue to invest in Housing as an infrastructure priority. Furthermore, homes must be built with consideration of the wider infrastructure and facilities that are required for communities to flourish.
- iii. In common with other rural areas, digital connectivity in the Scottish Borders has typically developed more slowly than in Scotland's more urban areas. If our region is to enjoy the economic, social and sustainability benefits experienced by others, it is essential that connectivity here does not perpetually trail that delivered in other parts of the country and in other countries.
Our Ask – Together with UK Government, Scottish Government should continue to prioritise digital connectivity in the Scottish Borders and similar areas, and the expectations here should reflect a level of service and connectivity which is industry leading and internationally competitive.
- iv. NPF4 must recognise and support the efforts of Scottish Borders to leverage its linkages to developments in neighbouring areas – Edinburgh and South East Scotland, South of Scotland and Northern England. This means taking a strategic view of the connections between regions, and

the need for plans which facilitate more equitable distribution of the benefits of growth.

Our Ask – If the benefits of an inclusive economy are to be extended beyond existing urban centres to smaller towns and rural areas, a bi-partite approach is needed which seeks to develop and enhance hubs in regions like the Scottish Borders, and, at the same time, ensures effective and low carbon infrastructural connections, creating conduits for entrepreneurship, workers, skills, training, goods and services.

- v. Above all, we must develop solutions to the market failure experienced by the region, which stultifies growth. NPF4 has a vital role to play in this respect in promoting an approach which is focused not only on traditional economic hubs, but, again, on spreading opportunities, and improving the contribution that Scottish Borders makes to national economic wealth and wellbeing in a sustainable way. Growth corridors based on the concepts of connectivity and sustainability provide a means of linking hubs of economic activity and generating stronger outputs and improved outcomes for the Scottish Borders.

Our Ask – Inclusive economic growth/an inclusive economy must mean something real for the Scottish Borders. As per our Ask at para iii, this means a spatial approach, which genuinely seeks dispersal of economic benefit more broadly and specifically to regions which have experienced long-term structural challenges. This means strengthening connectivity within the Scottish Borders and between the Scottish Borders and other places. It also means matching spatial development with policy initiatives designed to spread the benefits of an inclusive economy more widely and equitably.

NOTE

It is important to recognise that the Scottish Borders both has vital strategic and planning relationships with other regions beyond its legal boundaries, and forms a part or sub-region within a number of wider regions. These include:

The Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal

Thus, Scottish Borders Council's response to the Call for Ideas is augmented by a response from the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal local authority partners, of which Scottish Borders Council is one.

The South of Scotland

Scottish Borders Council has also been engaged with Dumfries & Galloway Council in developing a South of Scotland response to the Call for Ideas. As a result of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including cancellation of a joint workshop in Gretna on 30th March, it has not be possible to progress this work as hoped. Despite this, **it is intended to**

develop a South of Scotland perspective to assist in shaping NPF4 and the associated Regional Spatial Strategies. In the circumstances, we trust that Scottish Government will continue to be willing to receive input from the South of Scotland beyond the immediate deadline of 30th April for the Call for Ideas. Please would you confirm that this is in order.

April 2020