

Southern sustainability

Innovate Revitalise Transition Transform **Sustain**

This area broadly includes Dumfries and Galloway and The Scottish Borders, with links to the Ayrshires and Glasgow city region in the west and to the Edinburgh city region in the east.

The South of Scotland is strategically important with a strong sense of identity centred on networks of towns and villages, supported by distinctive landscapes and coasts. This is a place with a rich cultural heritage and exceptional environmental assets and natural resources. This area is ambitious for positive change in the coming years, and the immediate work to recover from the pandemic will form the basis of a longer term plan to respond to the challenges of climate change and support nature restoration and recovery.

Emissions in this area are moderate, with transport and industry emissions being partly offset by land use. The area has significant areas of woodland and peatland which act as a carbon sink and form the basis for future investment opportunities. The few sites that are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions include industrial and commercial activities, including some food and drink processing facilities. Coastal erosion and flood risk is expected to be a significant challenge in the future, particularly where there is a risk of impacting on key transport corridors or settlements.

Finding a new way of rural living that is consistent with climate change will be a challenge for this part of Scotland, given the relatively high levels of dependence on the car and the dispersed population. It is predominantly rural in character with small settlements and many rural homes, farms and smallholdings. Despite having high levels of wellbeing and quality of life, population decline is projected to continue in the west of the area, with fewer younger people and more retired people living there in the area in the future. The area's economy depends on low wage and public sector employment and this presents challenges for building a wellbeing economy.

Our strategy aims to ensure that this part of Scotland is recognised as a good place to live and work, and features more strongly as a destination in its own right.

In this area we will:

- create a low carbon network of towns;
- support sustainable development;
- innovate to sustain and enhance natural capital; and
- strengthen resilience and decarbonise connectivity.



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Legend

 Strategic maritime routes

 Strategic connection

 Blue economy

Liveable places

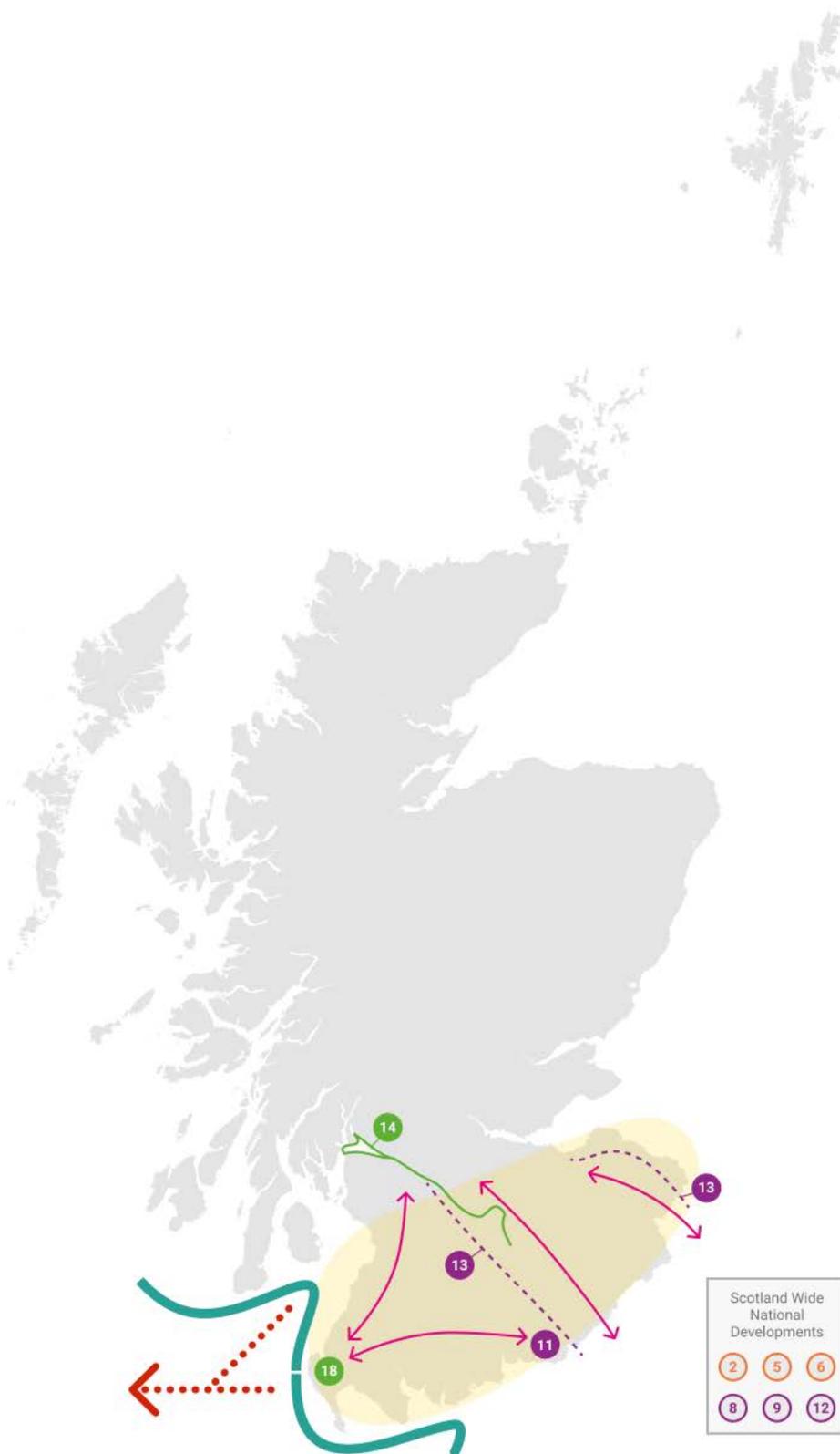
-  National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
-  Circular Economy Material Management Facilities
-  Digital Fibre Network

Productive places

-  Industrial Green Transition Zones
-  Pumped Hydro Storage
-  Chapelcross Power Station Redevelopment
-  High Speed Rail
-  Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

Distinctive places

-  Clyde Mission
-  Stranraer Gateway



Actions

22. Create a low-carbon network of towns

Settlements across this area provide services to the surrounding rural communities. The towns are well placed to be models of sustainable living with many undergoing regeneration including Stranraer, Jedburgh, Galashiels, Hawick and Eyemouth. Quality of life for people living in the area will depend on this network in the future and it should form the basis of a tailored response to the 20 minute neighbourhood concept. Town centres can be strengthened as they recover from the pandemic. New measures to build resilience to climate change will be required including flood risk management in key settlements.

The area is already investing in regenerating and future-proofing its towns and wider communities. The Stranraer Gateway Project is an opportunity to consolidate and bring new impetus to regenerate this strategically located settlement. Plans include expansion of the marina, supported by the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, and low carbon heating can be incorporated as part of the transformation of the wider town. Nearby Cairnryan is a crucial gateway to Scotland, with a need to make best use of existing connections.

The future growth of the area aims to consolidate existing settlements, capitalise on the strong sense of place of its towns and ensure accessibility by locating new development close to the Borders Rail Line. The Borderlands Place Programme, future Regional Land Use Partnerships and other strategic initiatives can support an integrated approach to protecting and restoring the area's natural assets, enhancing the built environment and achieving a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy across the area.

23. Support sustainable development.

The future sustainability of the area will depend on the creation of high-quality and green jobs for local people. The local economy will need to diversify to sustain a wider range of businesses and jobs. An emphasis on community wealth building will help to reduce dependence on public sector employment and a relatively

low-wage economy associated with rural and primary sectors. The current approach to investment focuses on strategic growth corridors linking economic hubs with transport routes. Whilst the strategic road network is an asset and contributes to the area's connections north and south, a long term strategy will require innovation and fresh thinking to ensure that future growth reflects our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing inequality.

Employment opportunities can support population growth, help to retain more young people and transition the area away from its current dependence on low wage sectors. New ways of working including remote working could attract more people to live here, supporting the economy and sustaining local services and facilities. This will also benefit from continued support for local skills development and centres of further and higher education including the Galashiels campus of Heriot Watt University and Glasgow University at the Crichton Campus, Dumfries.

Significant investment sites include the former nuclear power station at Chapelcross which benefits from existing grid connections and is an opportunity to repurpose the land by establishing a green energy park which contributes to national ambitions and innovation. Low carbon accessibility will be a key challenge, as the site is remote from Annan and not served by public transport. Providing access to wider markets, the port at Cairnryan could create further strategic growth opportunities. The expansion of Tweedbank and an inclusive approach to economic development in the Central Borders and Tweeddale are also strategic opportunities.

The area has aspirations to become a prime outdoor recreation and green tourism destination. Key projects include the South West Coastal Path, and projects supported by the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal; the Mountain Biking Innovation Centre at Innerleithen, updating the cycling experience and facilities at some of the 7stanes sites and Destination Tweed which will deliver a multi-user path and cycle route from Moffat to Eyemouth. More could be made of the area's border location and attractions to ensure visitors make better use of local services and support the economy and communities.

24. Innovate to sustain and enhance natural capital

This area's forests and woodland are a nationally significant asset and its extensive peatland will need to support carbon storage and sequestration. The Borderlands Natural Capital Programme will develop trials and sector strategies to restore biodiversity, build resilience and make the most of the area's natural assets to support climate change mitigation and adaptation. This will build on the successes of a range of nature restoration projects in the area, such as the Carrifran Wildwoods project.

The South of Scotland Regional Land Use Pilot is providing significant opportunity to work with landowners, landed interests and others to look at the multi-benefits from land use and to maximise natural capital opportunities.

The South of Scotland is also an important centre for renewable energy generation. Proposals for consolidating and extending existing wind farms and associated grid improvements and supply chain opportunities will require a carefully planned approach. The Solway Firth has significant potential for renewable energy generation in the future, but development will require careful planning given the sensitivity of the environment and its international importance for nature conservation. Decarbonisation of existing homes will be required, as well as a strategic approach to rolling out electric vehicle charging.

25. Strengthen resilience and decarbonise connectivity

The west of the area has a close relationship, and strategic connection to, Northern Ireland and Ireland via Cairnryan, as well as across

the English border to Carlisle and onwards to European markets. The connection to Northern Ireland and Ireland is already a focus for freight movements as a result of EU Exit.

In the east, the Scottish Borders has a role to play as part of the Edinburgh City Region, with the Borders Railway opening up new sites for sustainable development towards the north, and the south sustaining rural industries and connections to Northumberland.

The area's low-carbon future will depend on supporting modal shift and reducing car use, given current dependence on the car and need to improve access to services, education and employment. Low emissions vehicles will only go some of the way towards addressing future challenges. Further work is required to build the case for improvements to public transport routes. Public transport, including the bus network, will play an important role in decarbonisation and developing innovative solutions and linkages to the rail system. Active travel should be supported with wheeling, walking and cycling within and between towns and other communities linked to strategic routes for residents and visitors. This is important not only for local sustainability but also as a strategic attraction to take advantage of major outdoor recreation opportunities.

There is also a need to secure better digital connectivity to unlock the potential of rural living and home or hub working. The Borderlands Digital Infrastructure Programme will play a key role in supporting connectivity and responding to future technology and innovation.

Q16: Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

Q17: What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?