

**OUTCOMES FROM THE CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND  
8 FEBRUARY 2021**

**Outcome 1: Update from Regional Economic Partnership**

- The Convention welcomed the progress made in establishing the Regional Economic Partnership and its role in shaping the agenda for today's meeting. The focus on progressing the Regional Economic Strategy at pace is also welcomed and members committed to supporting engagement activity which will inform it by encouraging and promoting participation through their networks. Members noted the potential for the region to capitalise on a growing green economy, but that digital connectivity will be a key enabler.
- The Convention recognises that the Team South of Scotland approach has been successful in aligning funding support and intervention for businesses impacted by the Covid 19 epidemic, and agreed it is imperative that that approach continues in view of the ongoing restrictions and resulting challenge to economic recovery. The Convention re-affirmed its commitment to work together on future funding support to strengthen economic recovery in the region and committed to take steps to ensure this outcome is achieved.
- The Convention also agreed that securing an effective replacement to EU funding for the rural economy is vital to the region's economic recovery and that members will work together with the Regional Economic Partnership on a way forward to secure replacement funding which will be vital in supporting economic recovery. That collaborative effort will require to be sustained and in practical terms the Team South of Scotland approach must be supported by National Agencies.

**Outcome 2: Natural Capital and the Regional Economy**

- The Convention recognised:
  - the high importance of the Region's natural capital to the region's economy and jobs,
  - the strong natural capital expertise and partnerships that already exist in the Region, as reflected in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal submission, and
  - the considerable potential for the contribution of natural capital to regional jobs and economic recovery to grow in importance as public and private investment increases in the enhancement of the Region's natural capital and in opportunities such as sustainable food production, nature-based solutions for climate change such as woodland expansion and peatland restoration, and nature-based tourism.
- The Convention agreed to work together collaboratively to ensure that these economic benefits from natural capital are enjoyed within South of Scotland by communities and land managers by:
  - creating employment opportunities,
  - training local people in the new skills required, and

- working with businesses to develop markets, enhanced opportunities and confidence.
- The development of the Regional Economic Strategy provides an immediate opportunity for this collaborative action.

**Outcome 3: Infrastructure**

- The Convention welcomed the publication of the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan for 2021-22 to 2025-26, noting the Convention's interest in the key themes of the Plan and its commitment to delivering better outcomes for Scotland's people. In particular, the commitment to taking a place-based approach to considering infrastructure needs was welcomed, as was the attention placed on natural infrastructure, noting the previous discussion on the economic, social and environmental benefits of natural capital.
- The Convention discussed the key priorities of the region, as presented in the paper and the recent indicative Regional Spatial Strategy submission – identifying key priorities within transport, digital and energy infrastructure. Sustained investment in electricity grid infrastructure and digital connectivity was highlighted as important areas to ensure the full economic benefits of the region could be realised, particularly the potential for growth in renewable electricity generation.
- The Convention recognises the process underway through the STPR2 to identify the strategic transport interventions building on the South West Scotland Transport and Borders Transport Corridors Studies and working through the STPR2 South of Scotland Regional Transport Working Group which includes membership from the local authority partners represented in COSS and the Regional Transport Partnerships. Phase 2 of STPR2 is due to report in autumn 2021. Transport Scotland will continue to engage with partners to ensure alignment in the evidence base as Partners develop their indicative Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Transport Strategies, including east to west links within the region. An update on the outcome of these processes will be provided at a future Convention. The Convention recognises the impact of Covid-19 on public transport and the need to engage further on maintaining viable public transport models given the impact on transport demand.
- The Convention also notes the UK Government's ongoing Union Connectivity Review.
- An interest in ongoing infrastructure discussion was noted, and the need for ongoing collaboration to ensure maximum benefits to the region from the delivery of the infrastructure plan and regional spatial strategies, including with the National Agencies. The Convention shall consider the collective approach to international marketing in order to attract investment.

**Outcome 4: Workforce and Skills**

- Team South of Scotland partners continue to work together to identify the skills needs of the region and to ensure a coherent, aligned and effective response – across the system – to current and emerging labour market challenges.

- The new Education and Skills Strategic Coordination Group to lead on co-ordinating the revised education, training and skills offer to capitalise on new employment opportunities, and support up-skilling and re-skilling. Supporting the development of the Regional Economic Strategy, partners will work together to understand future skills and jobs opportunities and support and inspire young people, alongside other groups, to access those opportunities.
- The Convention recognises the importance of ensuring that there are clear pathways for young people into employment and education and the role that foundation apprenticeships can play. SOSE and SDS to report on the sectoral/employer demand for a shared apprenticeship in the South of Scotland.