

Selkirk & The Valleys Town Development Group

(Ref: FMcD-C/Heritage Group & JBC-Arts, Literature & Learning Group)

Heritage, Arts, Learning Activities and Culture Development Group- Proposals



During 2023-24 a series of public consultation events were held at Selkirk High School, Philiphaugh Community School, Victoria Halls and Philipburn Hotel.

Feedback was gathered to determine what people felt were the priorities and development gaps for Selkirk and the Valley communities to improve access to facilities and create new opportunities to bring prosperity to the area through tourism, development projects and new things to do for local residents/families.

Looking specifically at Feedback comments received from the public, the following represents the top priorities now proposed for consideration as part of Selkirk/The Valleys Heritage, Art, Learning Activities and Culture Development Plan 2024-2030:

- **A culture hub in the centre of Selkirk town providing access to local heritage, a visitor information point and focal point for cultural activities in the town.**
- **Better Access and Information with more things to see and do in the town-centre relating to local history, arts and heritage/marketing of attractions.**
- **More activities for families, with access after 5pm/and at weekends .**
- **Improve awareness of the various heritage highlights, hospitality and attractions in Selkirk/The Valleys, through better trails/digital APPs.**
- **More activities/stronger marketing of events etc at The Haining.**
- **More things to support opportunities for young people around employment, work experience and skills training.**
- **Community performance spaces and events to celebrate local history, arts/heritage/culture including music and town bands.**
- **Activities for older people in the town and the valley communities, with transport links between town and valleys**
- **More sense of community, collaboration and partnership working in celebrating and preserving local history and culture, including volunteering.**

Selkirk and the Valleys Town Team development group has met several times now to discuss the findings from feedback and priorities local people have identified as important to them. There is also wider placemaking work Scottish Borders Council is supporting. The Development Group will progress proposals/planning in liaison with SBC/key partners and funding bodies, so the people of Selkirk and The Valleys and tourists can benefit from improved access, fit for purpose facilities, volunteering, well-being activities and prosperity.

Top Priorities (Specifically for Heritage, Arts , Learning Activities and Culture)

There is evidence from feedback that the town of Selkirk lacks a vibrant town centre focal point and a place for people to get information on the local area, take part in activities/events and a town centre space to enjoy things linked to heritage, Arts & Culture. Consultation with the community has highlighted need for access and fit for purpose facilities, lack of young peoples' and family-friendly activities linked to heritage/arts/culture. Stronger profile for Valley communities/businesses is also needed. Actions to achieve this might include:

- **Raise awareness of heritage/culture attractions, food/beverage & accommodation including promoting trails to beautiful areas to visit and stay in Selkirkshire/Valleys.**
- **Improve facilities for tourists to encourage people to spend time/money in town centre enjoying local heritage/culture/areas of historic interest and quality retail/food.**

- Provide signposting/town centre information point to encourage local people and tourists to also explore Selkirk town and wider locality/stay longer and visit the beautiful rural areas- Alewater, Ettrick Valley, Yarrow, Ashkirk, Midlem, Lilliesleaf etc.
- Develop town-centre cultural centrepiece with opportunities for volunteering/training, learning and improving employment skills linked to heritage and creative activities.
- Share the unique history/heritage, traditions and creativity of Selkirk and the Valleys using new technology to share digital and physical showcasing of the stories of our people- past, present and future. Explore placemaking, storytelling and rich history.

From these priorities the development groups for Heritage plus Arts & Culture proposes the following as priorities to focus funding bids on:

- Carry out options appraisal for a new town centre cultural community hub incorporating: information point, signposting for events/what to see and do and a state of the art town-centre showcase presenting history/culture and learning activities celebrating Selkirk/Valley. Must be accessible to all.
- Build on development scoping/funding work that focused on heritage (Selkirk Market Place/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme improvements).
- Revisit Scottish Borders Council plans for creation of a new co-located showcase for local heritage/arts/culture (Proposal- creation of an extension to Selkirk Town Hall/Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom using former Cross Keys space to side of building for creation of accessible hub, information point and exhibition/heritage/activities space with heritage, culture, volunteering and digital focus. Option to look at incorporating flexible spaces in side=extension for education/learning, digital archive, library and a rooftop viewing point feature.
- Opportunity for Selkirk community input ideas around options appraisal for creating a flagship town centre information/heritage engagement facility.
- Opportunity to carry out efficiency review and gap analysis around benefits of co-locating Selkirk/Valleys cultural services in a new state of the art town centre facility.
- Opportunity for development group to work with Scottish Borders Council and stakeholder/funders on a refresh/update of existing development plans and previous scoping work around a town centre heritage/learning/access facility (consultant's report, architects plans and Levelling Up bid reports previously drafted by Scottish Borders Council during 2015-2022).
- Align programmes of learning & access activities for Selkirk/Valleys focused on heritage/culture festival for young people/family-friendly: focus on exhibitions, performances, digital presentations online, pop-up music/literature events & happenings, with skills development/volunteering opportunities to celebrate the creativity of young people in Selkirk/Valleys.
- Work with partners and schools to develop a flagship biennial event focusing on the outcomes of learning and engagement around heritage/culture focused creative

activities. A new young peoples' creativity festival- showcasing the results of the activities programme and working with schools/youth agencies and young people from the 6 schools and home-schooled, representing Selkirk/The Valley communities.

Next steps

Short term actions: June- October 2024

- Carry out options appraisal on best location for a town centre cultural hub and identify potential funding sources. Consult with Community/stakeholders on recommendations. Refine proposals as Draft Plan and seek partnership/stakeholder buy-in to deliver.

Short-Medium Term actions: October 2024- March 2025

- Create Heritage/Arts/Learning & Culture business plan for Selkirk & Valleys and identify potential sources of support/funding within a focused action plan to deliver priorities.
- Monitor and evaluate progress and update community on work of Selkirk & The Valleys Development Focus Group in progressing proposals for priority projects in Heritage/Arts & Culture.
- Align Heritage/Arts & Culture development proposals/funding plan to all the locality development plans and SBC's strategic direction on placemaking/communities.
- Update on progress/plans being separately reporting on in Focus Groups for Selkirk regarding Business development, Tourism/hospitality & Marketing, Environment & Infrastructure, Well-being and Young People/Skills & Volunteering.
- Liaise with partners/schools, stakeholders and funders on development of a Young Peoples' Creativity Festival for Selkirk/Valleys. Roll-out annual programme of learning and youth engagement activities inspired by local heritage. arts and culture.

Medium term/outcomes: March 2025- March 2026

- Showcase the results and outcomes of Young Peoples creativity projects and heritage/cultural skills development opportunities in a Biennial Summer 2026 Festival representing the six schools in Selkirk & The Valleys, including home-schooled.
- Promote and present heritage/culture inspired activities, creativity highlights/performances in a series of summer 2026 public events and digital online presentations- **including family friendly performances indoors and outdoors, in a range of community and natural environment locations within Selkirk/Valleys.** (Performances could include *town/village halls, museums, care homes, historic properties, schools and also iconic outdoor sites such as: The Haining/Haining Lochside, Mauldsheugh Wood, Etrick Marshes, St Marys Loch, Selkirk Hill, The Linglie, Football/Rugby & Cricket grounds, Rivers Etrick/Yarrow, Ale & Tweed, The Yair, Bannerfield, Southern Upland Way, Midlem village green, Woll to Outer Huntly pathways in Ashkirk, Philiphaugh, Bowhill, Three Brethren, the Black Bob Stell and the Market Place in Selkirk- plus others tbc.*)

Long term options/By 2030 (subject to successful funding being secured/stakeholder and partnership agreements for delivering new build/co-located service/activities):

- Sustain activities/well-being, volunteering and community education programmes exploring local heritage, historic collections, arts, literature, music & culture.
- Every 2 years: Selkirk/The Valleys Biennial Young Peoples' Creativity Festival.
- Develop and launch new flagship town-centre located venue: co-located Heritage/Arts & Culture provision with tourist information & marketing of locality with state of the art access for all through heritage activities/collections and exhibitions.
- Present Selkirk & Valleys through physical displays and interpretation including online/digital heritage and virtual reality experiences- incorporating co-located museum, gallery, tourist/local info, onsite access to Clapperton digital image archive and Selkirk public library with online IT access onsite. Include a space for hosting meetings, learning events and volunteer skills focusing on heritage/culture/collections and archives engagement and community partnership working.
- Community Cultural Hub/phased development additional options - consider potential for a rooftop viewing experience- creating a unique visitor attraction for Selkirk town centre as part of proposed new heritage/culture community hub showcase development. Looking out over the town centre to the Selkirk hills/valleys beyond/possibly with a retro tearoom/cafe incorporated. (Something unique for the town/Borders as a visitor attraction and a potential source of income and employment to support sustainability. Could be run as a community café or local franchise and contribute added-value in business development opportunities plus upskilling and employment for local people/community groups.)

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