

**Chair's Report  
SLAED AGM, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**1.0 Overview**

- 1.1 Throughout 2021, the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) group has given, and continues to give, local authority economic development a voice at the table with national government and other national agencies, to help shape the response and plans for economic recovery and renewal.
- 1.2 In addition to traditional economic development services, the work of SLAED is focused increasingly on a broader agenda, making linkages with colleagues across professions to maximise the impact of the full range of economic levers available to councils and to ensure holistic, joined-up service design and delivery. Economic development has played an important co-ordinating role between all business-facing council services such as planning, environmental health, licensing, rates, etc. providing a more joined up approach for the business community.
- 1.3 A key operating principle of the SLAED Executive, is that SLAED is represented at meetings and events by the relevant officers, with the relevant expertise. On that basis, SLAED is now represented in many national discussion groups, which includes senior Scottish Government officials, such as the joint four weekly SOLACE, Scottish Government, COSLA, Improvement Service and Enterprise Agencies discussion sessions, the Business Gateway Board, the Business Support Partnership and at COSLA meetings, such as the attendance at the COSLA Environment and Economy Board.
- 1.4 During 2021 there have been some changes to the chairs and vice chairs across SLAED's strategic and thematic subgroups. I would like to thank all the officers who have taken up the mantle and the great commitment from those, who have now stepped down, in guiding these groups over the years; I am sure many will maintain an active interest in SLAED discussions going forward.

**2.0 SLAED 3 Year Strategic Plan, 2022-25**

(see: [SLAED-Strategic-Plan-2022-25.pdf](#))

- 2.1 One of the key activities of SLAED during the calendar year of 2021 was to refresh its 3 Year Strategic Plan, 2022-25. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all local government colleagues who provided their time and expertise to shape the content and future focus of the Strategic Plan. Particular thanks to the excellent secretariat support from the Improvement Service.
- 2.2 It is appreciated that the revised Strategic Plan is launched at a time of immense challenges for the economic development profession within local government, in an environment of continued economic uncertainty and unprecedented impacts, not only on the Scottish economy, but on a global scale.

- 2.3 To ensure the delivery of a resilient, robust and relevant action plan going forward, the SLAED Executive, and associated strategic and thematic SLAED sub-groups, will need to ensure that such activities are reviewed and refreshed on a continual basis.

### **3.0 SLAED Achievements during 2021**

- 3.1 A snapshot of SLAED achievements during 2021, overseen by the SLAED Executive, are summarised in **Table 1** below.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The overview of SLAED activities and achievements throughout 2021 highlights the importance of local government economic development services to help shape economic recovery and renewal.
- 4.2 The success of SLAED in being able to deliver on the ambitions set out within the 3 Year Strategic Plan, 2022-25, is contingent on the continued collaboration and partnership working of economic development colleagues across Scotland.
- 4.3 Going forward, the work of SLAED needs to continue to add value to support the realisation of inclusive and sustainable place-based and person-centred economies at a local, regional and national level.

## APPENDIX A

Table 1: SLAED Achievements, 2021	
<p><b>EXECUTIVE</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Ishabel Bremner</b>  <a href="mailto:ishabel.bremner@argyll-bute.gov.uk">ishabel.bremner@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Vice Chairs:</b>  <b>Pamela Stevenson</b>  <a href="mailto:Pamela.stevenson@fife.gov.uk">Pamela.stevenson@fife.gov.uk</a>  <b>Rory Young</b>  <a href="mailto:Rory.young@dundeecity.gov.uk">Rory.young@dundeecity.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>The SLAED Executive met on a monthly basis throughout 2021. Some key achievements are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refreshed 3 Year Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.</li> <li>• SLAED Response: Union Connectivity Review Roundtable: Sir Peter Hendy, 13<sup>th</sup> January.</li> <li>• SLAED Response: Advanced Manufacturing Consultation, 12<sup>th</sup> February.</li> <li>• SLAED Response: UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Scottish Affairs Select Committee, 16<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• Subsidy control and COVID-19 business grants, 16<sup>th</sup> February – letter from Chair to SOLACE and then to Scottish Government (SG).</li> <li>• A virtual roundtable discussion on green ports with key public and third sector organisations, 24<sup>th</sup> February.</li> <li>• Retail Strategy Steering Group 4<sup>th</sup> March.</li> <li>• EDAS / NOLB Business Session, presentation by SLAED Chair, 30<sup>th</sup> March.</li> <li>• Green Recovery Workshop, April.</li> <li>• Vacant &amp; Derelict Land Investment Programme panel representation.</li> <li>• UK Shared Prosperity Fund Rural Roundtable, with UK Government Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Defra.</li> <li>• Scottish Parliament Finance Committee Call for Evidence – Replacement for EU Funds, 8<sup>th</sup> November.</li> <li>• Written request to COSLA to consider focusing resources on how the impact of EU Exit on food and drink supply chains (price rises) and food security (local shortages) are entwined intrinsically with other pressing issues, such as rising fuel and energy costs, for the public sector and communities in general, 30<sup>th</sup> November.</li> <li>• COSLA Boards: such as Business Gateway and Environment and Economy.</li> <li>• SOLACE, COSLA, IS, SG and Enterprise Agencies – 4 weekly calls.</li> </ul>

<b>Table 1: SLAED Achievements, 2021 (continued)</b>	
<p><b>PEOPLE (STRATEGIC GROUP)</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Ruth Cooper</b>  <a href="mailto:ruth.cooper@renfrewshire.gov.uk">ruth.cooper@renfrewshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Vice Chair:</b>  <b>TBC</b></p>	<p>Building on the Scottish Government and COSLA Partnership Agreement signed in December 2018, to support the transformational change to assist with the redesign and reconfiguration of local employability services to improve outcomes through No One Left Behind (NOLB), the work of SLAED People group and local authority employability staff has intensified and grown in scale due to the pandemic. Some key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular weekly network meetings and workshops enabling the sharing of best practice and the engagement of a wide range of national stakeholders and partners such as DWP, SDS and Third Sector.</li> <li>• Strengthened governance arrangements via Ministers and elected Members demonstrating the valuable and critical contribution employability makes to the overall wellbeing of our communities supporting a route out of poverty, inequality and disadvantage</li> <li>• Investment in local employability provision has significantly increased for £7m in 2019/20 to an investment of £80.65m in 2020/21. The move to increased local governance supporting a place-based approach to deliver a needs-led, person-centred service is welcome, but investment in NOLB has grown much more quickly than initially anticipated.</li> <li>• Strengthen the functionality and effectiveness of local partnerships – with 32 self-assessments and local improvement action plans.</li> <li>• Increase national coherence and local flexibility through the creation of national frameworks such as the Employer Recruitment Incentives, Service Standards, shared Measurement, Delivery Plans, and a Customer Charter.</li> <li>• Diverse and inclusive approaches to commissioning, procurement and grant funding.</li> <li>• Data Toolkit to help identify local investment priorities.</li> </ul>

**Table 1: SLAED Achievements, 2021 (continued)**

**BUSINESS (STRATEGIC GROUP)**

**Co-Chairs:**

**Allan Conry**

[ConryA@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:ConryA@northlan.gov.uk)

**Graham Smith**

[Graham.Smith@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:Graham.Smith@glasgow.gov.uk)

Further to weekly meetings of the SLAED Business group during 2021, the main achievements were as follows:

- **Covid19 Grants:** since the introduction of national lockdowns and restrictions by Scottish Government in March 2020, local authorities across Scotland have administered over 20 grant programmes to support business survive the impact of the pandemic, dealing with over 107,750 applications, making around 91,430 awards totalling just over £1billion. Working closely with Scottish Government colleagues, officers across the country helped design, implement and deliver programmes of support that would enable business to access financial support as easily and quickly as possible.
- **Business Support Partnership:** the SLAED Business Group has been heavily involved in the Business Support Partnership (BSP), a collaboration which has an ambitious vision for the future. To see Scotland independently recognised as having the most impactful, efficient and easy to access public sector business support system in the world. Realising this vision will require even greater collaboration between Scottish and Local Government, Scotland's business, enterprise & skills agencies, and the wider public, private, academic and third sectors. The BSP is ideally positioned to facilitate this collaboration, as it is already the vehicle where Scotland's main economic delivery partners are working together to design, develop and deliver a more streamlined, effective, and easy to navigate business support landscape. Founding partners include Local Authorities (SLAED) and Business Gateway Networks, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and South of Scotland Enterprise.
- **Business Gateway Service Design Review:** in March 2021, the Business Gateway Board instructed the Business Gateway National Unit, COSLA, to conduct a review of its service with a strong focus on meeting customer needs and how the service is delivered. Following a competitive procurement process, Hellon was commissioned to undertake this work and have held a series of workshops involving economic development staff across the country to feed into the process. The review will also cover areas such as governance, targets and monitoring as well as the way in which Business Gateway as a service can be better aligned with wider economic development activities. The review is due to conclude in early spring 2022.

<b>Table 1: SLAED Achievements, 2021 (continued)</b>	
<p><b>UK FUNDING (THEMATIC GROUP)</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Malcolm Leitch</b>  <a href="mailto:Malcolm.Leitch@glasgow.gov.uk">Malcolm.Leitch@glasgow.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Vice Chair:</b>  <b>John Davidson</b>  <a href="mailto:John.davidson@dundeecity.gov.uk">John.davidson@dundeecity.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>In 2021 the SLAED UK Funding (previously EU Funding) Group continued to meet quarterly via MS Teams with relevant Scottish Government officials attending on two occasions. Its focus remained on the operational issues relating to European Social Fund supported employability programmes. SLAED continues to be represented on the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) and on the PMC working Group that was set up in 2021 to review the claims and payment processes. Some key achievements are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Affairs Select Committee of the UK Parliament launched an inquiry into Scotland and the UK Shared Prosperity to which SLAED responded in January 2021.</li> <li>• In March the UK Government launched three new funds (the Community Ownership, Community Renewal and Levelling Up Funds) using the powers conferred on it through the UK Internal Market Act 2020. An ad hoc SLAED group was put in place to review these developments and a response was submitted to a Scottish Parliament call for evidence on these funds in November 2021.</li> <li>• SLAED response to the UK Government consultation on its proposed framework for subsidy control was submitted in March 2021.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PERFORMANCE (THEMATIC GROUP)</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Gary Hughes</b>  <a href="mailto:gary.hughes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk">gary.hughes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Vice Chairs:</b>  <b>David Boyle</b>  <a href="mailto:DavidPatrick.Boyle@glasgow.gov.uk">DavidPatrick.Boyle@glasgow.gov.uk</a>  <b>Wilma Gordon</b>  <a href="mailto:GordonW@angus.gov.uk">GordonW@angus.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>The main outcome every year from the SLAED Performance Group is the publication of the SLAED Indicators Report, 2020-21. Further achievements in 2021 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a data dashboard to show performance measures out with the annual report.</li> <li>• Recommendations made to improve LGBF economic indicators to better reflect impact of the pandemic.</li> <li>• Sectors list improved and now consistent with Business Gateway sectors.</li> <li>• New measure on Carbon emissions and wellbeing adopted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RURAL (THEMATIC GROUP)</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Juliette Cooke</b>  <a href="mailto:Juliette.Cooke@dumgal.gov.uk">Juliette.Cooke@dumgal.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>The SLAED Rural group's achievements throughout 2021 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced Phil Raines to the SLAED Rural group. Phil is the Scottish Government's new Head of Rural Economy and Communities Division.</li> <li>• Feedback to Phil Raines on the experience of applying for UK Government Levelling Up funding from the perspective of a rural local authority.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OECD Rural Innovation - contributed to an OECD research project.</li> <li>• Rural Entrepreneur Fund - introduced the Fund and associated Scottish Government Team to SLAED Business Group.</li> </ul>
<b>Table 1: SLAED Achievements, 2021 (continued)</b>	
<p><b>TOURISM (THEMATIC GROUP)</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b>  <b>Tracey Martin</b>  <a href="mailto:Tracey.Martin@falkirk.gov.uk">Tracey.Martin@falkirk.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Vice Chairs:</b>  <b>Andrew McKean</b>  <a href="mailto:andrew.mckean@renfrewshire.gov.uk">andrew.mckean@renfrewshire.gov.uk</a>  <b>Colin Simpson</b>  <a href="mailto:colin.simpson@highland.gov.uk">colin.simpson@highland.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>During 2021 SLAED Tourism group facilitated regular engagement with key agencies such as Visit Scotland, Scottish Government, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Enterprise Agencies, Business Gateway and many more.</p> <p>The group also worked collectively to ensure a consistent approach to industry support grants, etc. A key function of the group is to share knowledge, encourage best practice, as well as to feed in at a national level to discussions on rebuilding Scotland’s tourism industry this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation on <a href="#">STERG</a> (a sub group of the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group) which includes contributing to the <a href="#">STERG National Action Plan</a>. and inputting into Scenario Planning currently being worked on.</li> <li>• Representation on the <a href="#">Scottish Government Tourism Taskforce</a> chaired by Cabinet Secretary Ian McKee created to drive forward the recovery of Scotland’s vital tourism sector and who have now published their <a href="#">recommendations for recovery</a> working on implementing Phase 1 recovery and refining Phase 2.</li> <li>• Representation on the STA Destination Forum</li> </ul> <p>In the last few months The Tourism Group has had representation on the following calls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STA Destination Member Forum</li> <li>• STA Member Council Call</li> <li>• STERG Working Group Call</li> <li>• John Muir Way Working Group</li> <li>• Outdoors Scotland Tourism Strategy Consultation</li> <li>• National visitor management.</li> </ul>