Executive Summary:

The case for a National Park in the Scottish Borders

A compelling case can be made for a National Park (NP), shaped for the Southern Borders, delivering sustainable economic growth and based on long term stewardship of the unique and treasured rich historic culture and inspiring landscapes of the Borderlands. An NP that can harness competitive advantage and create jobs while nurturing the Borders natural assets.

In this summary, I would like to draw attention to the following themes which run consistently through my findings:
The evidence and need

To qualify for consideration, the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 sets down three conditions that an area must meet.

1. Outstanding national importance,
2. Distinct character and coherent identity and
3. Special needs that NP status can address.

The evidence does support the case that the proposed area meets the three conditions of park status because it has:

- Beautiful, historically authentic and geologically significant Borderland landscape that is nationally outstanding and admired;
- A continuing vibrant and distinct identity with a strong coherent pride of place treasured across all age-groups arising from a unique cultural heritage;
- Land based businesses and communities entering a new era of policy and support mechanisms;
- Social and economic special needs like incomes, jobs and digital connectivity that, for many residents, are well below the national average - trends that park status could change.

Over and above meeting the three core conditions, the area has already demonstrated that:

- There is enthusiastic support for the designation from people, communities and businesses looking for new, creative solutions and increased collaboration;
- There are people living and working in the wider Borders and the east of Scotland speaking about the opportunities and benefits that NP status provides.

The suggested NP area is approx. 25% of the Scottish Borders Council area with around 5% of the population (20% if Hawick is included).
The opportunity:

NPs are a proven way of applying innovation and creativity in cultural and natural landscapes. 90% of the public say that NPs are important to them and there is strong evidence that the designation could achieve three main outcomes for the Southern Borders and the nation.

(1) Visitor Experience
• Improving the Southern Borders as a national tourism destination of choice through investment in high quality visitor facilities and information underpinning the tourism economy;
• Helping more people of all abilities, from a wider cross section of society, in making the most of the Southern Borders and improving their health, well-being and productivity through active participation, learning and volunteering.

(2) Rural Development
• Supporting the kind of enterprising community-led sustainable development and regeneration, based on local assets within a national ‘brand’ that makes places thrive;
• Strengthening and diversifying the economy in the Southern Borders and surrounding area;
• Stimulating investment, employment, spending and business confidence leading to increased revenues to the Scottish Government from income, corporation and consumption taxes like VAT;
• Boosting employment opportunities and helping people develop and train for employment;
• Addressing the challenges of integrating different land management objectives.

(3) Conservation
• Celebrating and telling the story of the unique Borderland cultural heritage;
• Supporting and contributing to regional and national goals for securing large scale landscape beauty, wildlife conservation, river catchment and carbon management improvements;
• Inspiring young people to intelligently steward the cultural and natural assets that sustain and make the Southern Borders a great place to live, work and visit.
Southern Borders National Park model: facilitator and problem solver

Scottish legislation allows the model to be tailored to facilitate local solutions and improve conditions. The model can complement national and regional strategies and other NP commitments while learning from their experience and know-how.

The report findings support further investigation into a distinctive Southern Borders National Park model. It would facilitate partners, businesses and people to build on and enhance the area’s unique qualities that make the area special and it would kick start a step change in local economic productivity, improvement to social conditions, civic participation and enterprise.

The successful model is likely to include:
• Considerable local influence and expertise in governance and management with a willingness to ‘walk alongside’ stakeholders and communities;
• A ‘best value’ park ‘body’ and lean structure that balances operational expenditure with a return in sustainable economic activity (and employment) of at least a £1: £5 ratio and more, when the uplift in public well-being and environmental and cultural productivity are included;
• Priorities that make the most of its unique Border location and exploit efficiencies through shared services and close co-ordination with partners within and around the area;
• Close co-operation with willing and responsible land managers supporting farming livelihoods, food and timber production and other crucial parts of the rural economy;
• Using culture and environment to boost a fragile local economy, create jobs, retain and attract young people, meet the Scottish Government’s strategic outcomes and priorities and build international profile;
• A natural environment for everyone; helping to deliver important environmental services like keeping fresh waters clean, lowering the risk of flooding and reversing biodiversity decline;
• Opportunities to market premium goods and services linked to NP status;
• Opportunities to learn from and partner with other NPs in the UK and worldwide;

Next steps for the Campaign:
(1) To listen with understanding to and constructively address the concerns of people who, quite reasonably, are unsure of the implications (and opportunities) of NP status on their livelihoods and communities.
(2) To win support from SBC and Scottish Ministers for a new National Park, shaped for the Southern Borders, and based on an area covering Cheviot, Teviot and Liddesdale.
Scottish Borders National Park area by key facts and numbers

Based on an area including north Cheviots and land to south west of Carter Bar.

Population
Challenged and under pressure
Low density, dispersed, ageing in Cheviot. Centralisation of education, caring, community and retail services in Teviot.

Health & Wellbeing
4.5 million people live within a 2-hour drive time. Nearly 8 million people live within a 3-hour drive time. Edinburgh has highest disposable income in UK.

Trends
High residential desirability but ageing demographic and outmigration of young
GVA below average growth, low average visitor stays and low national and international area profile.
Maturing forestry – low added value and high impact on roads.
Carbon economy – on shore wind – some ‘live’ sites but difficulties in bringing to market and obtaining grid connections and low added value. Uncertainty from post Brexit drop in rural support mechanisms impacting on hill farming.

Landscape
Outstanding quality, beauty and variety
No major roads or large settlements. Hill slopes and summits in uplands and foothills with highpoint of 750m. Moorland mosaic with wide horizons and distant unobstructed views – grand and intimate scales – wildland qualities. 3 of 9 Borders SLAs. Distinctive dome and cone shaped hills and spurs with rugged peaks, frequent rock outcrops and scree. Steep-sided glacial meltwater channels.

Wildlife habitats
Rare but accessible and species-rich
Heather moorland and blanket bog, raptors, waders black grouse, red squirrel. River Tweed catchment with salmon, otters and other wetland species.

Culture
Long, epic and rich
Anglo/Scottish wars 14-16thC - Reivers and Common Ridings. Cheviot sheep supporting Border textile towns from 14thC. Centre of Romani people in Scotland. Authentic traditions of droving, literature, ballad, song and painting.
**Historic sites**

- Greatest density of scheduled monuments in Borders
- Prehistoric (Stone, Bronze and Iron Age) hill forts settlements and standing stones. Roman & Saxon remains. Castles, designed landscapes, fortified towers. Connection to Flodden Field.

**Special features**

- Special and unusual
  - Prehistoric and Roman features e.g. Dere Street and Clennell Street Hill passes, paths, hill top towers. Pastoral and hill farming patterns. Drystone dykes and stells.

**Economy**

- Dependence on primary industries and small business.
- Lack of professional jobs.
- GVA per head below Scottish average. Poor broadband and mobile coverage.

**Strategy**

- North and south Border gateways and outreach opportunities

**Transport**

- A68/A7 Trunk Road and A1 nearby.
- Limited public transport.
- But ... Borders Railway - longest domestic railway constructed in Britain for over 100 years.

**Innovation**

- Cross Border sharing of skills and services with Northumberland National Park.
- Ecosystem services, carbon, flood control, mini adventures, cycling, crafts, dark skies and prehistory tourism.

**Access**

- Classic cross Border ways - Pennine Way LDR - ends in Kirk Yetholm. Link through other Great Trails.
- Network of historic routes used by nation defining people and armies.

**Geology & soils**

- 440 - 299m years of distinctive geodiversity with high carbon soils like peat. Unique continental collision fault line Iapetus Suture. Cheviot a ‘historic Mt Etna’.