



The Bridge

To all members of The Bridge

12 December 2022

Please reply to:

Morag Walker, Executive Officer
3 Roxburgh House Court,
Roxburgh Street
Galashiels TD1 1NY

Mobile: 07841794862

Telephone: 01896 755370

E mail: morag.walker@thebridge.scot

Dear Member

We wrote to you in July about the work being done with the Scottish Government and our Third Sector Interface (TSI) partners to make community development and representation in the Borders more effective. We asked for your views and held local member consultation events.

We took your views forward with Scottish Government and our partners, and around the time of the AGM three weeks ago the likely outcome of the discussions started to become clear. We were able to give those of you able to attend the AGM a partial update, and we can now write in more detail.

First, some context: The Bridge was originally formed in 2007 from the merger of three of the Scottish Borders' four Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS). Most of the funding for our core CVS work (i.e. not including community transport and shops) came from Scottish Government. From 2009 the Scottish Government funding was awarded to the Scottish Borders TSI, a partnership between The Bridge, Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service (BAVS), Volunteer Centre Borders and Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber. Last year, the Scottish Government asked the TSI Partnership to review the way it worked, and that led to the current discussions.

The Bridge has always been open to the option of forming a single organisation to carry out community development and representation across the Borders. This was the option finally favoured by the partner boards, and work then went forward on the best way to achieve it. Proposals on this were finalised last week, but elements involving The Bridge are of course subject to your approval as members.

The proposals are for a single new organisation that would unite TSI community development and representation work in the Borders. There would also be a second new organisation that would unite community transport services across the Borders. Although these two new organisations would replace The Bridge, we feel the proposals will deliver the best results for the Borders. It is also a vision that Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council (who fund community transport and some TSI-related work) are happy with; this is crucial to long-term financial sustainability.

providing community and voluntary sector support

Scottish Borders Community Development Company (operating as The Bridge)

Registered in Scotland as a Company Limited by Guarantee No. 305830: Scottish Charity No. SC037646

VAT Reg. No. 918 1477 11 Registered/Head Office: 3 Roxburgh House Court, Roxburgh Street, Galashiels, TD1 1PF

www.thebridge.scot

The proposed steps to achieving this would be (broadly) as follows:

1. The new TSI will be set up and gain charitable status and The Bridge will transfer its community development and representation service to it: this should be achieved by 31st March 2023.
2. In parallel, The Bridge and BAVS will form a new community transport organisation and transfer their Wheels projects to it. This may take longer than the TSI transfer as there has not been as much preparation, but would be taken forward as early as possible.
3. Our two charity shops, which have traditionally been seen as primarily funding the Wheels projects, would very likely be transferred into the community transport organisation.
4. The Bridge will then be left without any continuing operations. It would be wound-up and its remaining assets (principally its unrestricted reserves) transferred to charities with similar Objects, as provided for in our constitution. These would most naturally be the new TSI and the new community transport organisation.

The board will be taking professional advice at every step along the way to ensure it fulfils its responsibilities and handles the technical aspects of the changes properly. A key part of this will be continued communication and consultation with members and the calling of Extraordinary General Meetings when appropriate.

We appreciate these proposed changes are far-reaching, but there is a clear path to the final destination and will do our utmost to ensure your interests as members are safeguarded throughout.

The first communication from the new TSI is attached, and includes details of how to sign up to its (free) membership.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Morag Walker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Morag Walker
Executive Officer