

FAQs

Why are Live Borders and SBC looking at services/properties/facilities?

We need to look at the services being provided, and where they are provided from, to ensure that services are accessible, relevant, and cost-effective. The current arrangements, including maintaining more than 60 properties, are not financially sustainable. Some services are experiencing reduced usage while others are also affected by hugely increased costs, including energy costs.

A number of the Council properties Live Borders manage/operate are aging and are requiring significant investment to simply maintain their ongoing operation. There is currently not the funding available to maintain them all, to invest in making improvements or to redevelop key facilities. A smaller property estate will enable future focused investment into fewer key facilities.

Independent consultants with extensive experience of working with local authorities and sport and culture trusts have reviewed services and facilities and have provided a report and their input. This will, along with community consultation, shape our thinking and the development of recommendations in due course. No decisions are being taken right now.

Is X/Y facility going to close/reopen? Will opening hours change?

No decisions are being taken on service or property changes right now.

Independent and experienced consultants have presented a report and their suggestions based on an objective review of services and properties, but the Council recognises that there are further considerations and options which need to be explored. Community and stakeholder consultation is essential before any decisions are made.

The consultants' report does however make it clear that the scale of change required is significant and changes to service delivery and properties will, along with other changes, ensure that Live Borders can deliver high quality services throughout the region within budget.

This also supports the Council's Estate Strategy, which aims to make best use of key assets for the benefit of communities, reduce underutilised properties, and significantly lower carbon emissions.

How are you going to consult with communities?

A robust, structured approach to community and stakeholder engagement is being developed which will gather community views to help shape future services. Consultation is expected to start in May 2025 and include:

- In person meetings with Community Councils, Town Teams, Councillors, and local community groups to understand local priorities and place plans etc. to help shape wider engagement •
- Planned ‘Community Conversations’
- Online public consultation to gather input on the consultants’ suggestions, any other identified options and capture other views, ideas and suggestions
- Further engagement with key stakeholders as required, including key user groups

All feedback gathered during this period and the insights from over 6,500 local residents gathered during the joint strategic review in 2023 will be considered to help develop and shape final property and service recommendations which are expected to be brought to Council for decisions in early autumn.

In preparing for this engagement initial issues and considerations arising from the consultants’ proposals have been captured by officers and these are detailed for each locality. This will be expanded as the engagement with communities takes place and the further assessment of proposals progresses.

Why are the consultants proposing so many closures/changes to services/properties?

Ultimately the status quo is not an option. Maintaining the current service delivery arrangements and associated properties is costing too much money. Live Borders is not able to operate within its budget and the Council is having to provide millions of pounds of additional funding as a result, which is unaffordable. Last year around £2.5m of additional funding was required to keep services operating.

The consultants have identified some operational changes and opportunities that Live Borders can take forward and explore which would help address part of the problem, however property costs are having a particularly large financial impact. Reducing the number of properties, including through delivering services in different locations or in different ways, would provide recurring savings.

The Council recognises that there are further considerations and options which need to be explored however, and community and stakeholder consultation is essential before any decisions are made.

Could community organisations take on a facility/service to keep it open?

In a number of cases the consultants have identified properties where Community Asset Transfers could be explored. This is likely to be just one of a series of options for these properties which will be further considered, discussed with key stakeholders in the community and consulted upon.

See [our dedicated Community Asset Transfer webpages](#) for more information on what they are and other support and advice.

What information is being considered in the review?

A wide range of information has been considered by the consultants, including usage data, cost analysis, and property condition.

Alongside the upcoming consultation, the feedback from over 6,500 local residents gathered during the joint review of sport, leisure and cultural services and facilities in 2023 will also inform future recommendations.

There are many factors to be considered however, including the impact on service users, communities and the economy.

What is the timeline for changes to be made?

Some operational changes put forward by the consultants to help Live Borders become more efficient and effective are likely to be implemented by Live Borders quite quickly. These will help to address some of the ongoing financial pressures, through reducing costs and increasing income.

Other changes, particularly relating to properties, will take longer and can only be progressed following robust consultation.

What is the anticipated impact on staff?

The operational changes to be made by Live Borders will likely have a staffing impact. Engagement with staff and trade unions will take place as required.

Depending on the service and property changes agreed in due course there may be further staff implications. Wherever possible staff reductions will be managed through natural turnover and vacancy management. Support will be available to all affected staff.

Why can't the Council give Live Borders more money?

With significant ongoing financial pressures and competing priorities the Council is not able to continue to provide additional financial support over and above the annual management fee to Live Borders.

To do so, the Council would need to increase its income, for example through larger Council Tax rises, or remove or significantly reduce money from other Council services.

The Council has supported Live Borders with millions of pounds of additional funding in recent years to help address some of the financial challenges being experienced.

The Council has increased the management fee for Live Borders from £4.8m to £5.4m for 2025/26 and provided an extra £1.2m of one-off support, but this is not financially sustainable.

No direct savings to the Council will be achieved from the review. Changes to how and where Live Borders delivers services are needed to enable the organisation to operate within its existing budget and the rationalisation of properties will enable future focused investment into fewer key facilities.

What changes has Live Borders made to deliver savings?

Live Borders has already made changes to its operations and back-office functions and continues to progress a range of projects with the Council as part of the Joint Transformational Change Programme, which was created following the joint review of sport, leisure and cultural services and facilities in 2023.

The review of service delivery and properties is just one part of the wider programme, which aims to deliver high quality sport, leisure and cultural services through a financially sustainable and high performing partnership.

Live Borders has also exhausted its financial reserves over recent years in investing in and sustaining services.

Why isn't the Council considering bringing all sport, leisure and cultural services back in-house?

There are many benefits to these services operating through the existing arrangements with Live Borders. This includes the availability of relief from non-domestic rates which would not be available to the Council and which therefore provides a significant financial benefit.

Major changes were also made to the governance arrangements in late 2024, when Live Borders became a single member trust, with the Council the only shareholder. This model has allowed Live Borders to retain its independence and charitable status and supports greater strategic alignment between the two organisations.

Active Schools and Sports Development services were also transferred back to the Council last autumn following an options appraisal which identified clear benefits to this move.

A new board of trustees at Live Borders is now in place, following multiple appointments in March 2025, including that of Bill Douglas as the chair. Recruitment is ongoing for a new Chief Executive Officer.

These recent and imminent changes are expected to deliver opportunities to further strengthen the relationship between the Council and Live Borders and drive forward the transformational change required to ensure our sport, leisure and cultural services can be delivered in a sustainable way.