

Live Borders – PCC Briefing (facts & figures)

- Sustainability, or lack thereof, is mentioned 179 times in Integratis' 158 page Sport & Culture report [ref. 8], now under consultation.
- It is difficult to say which is the key message about Live Borders sustainability.
- Key challenges are outlined on pages 8–9, with the last saying:

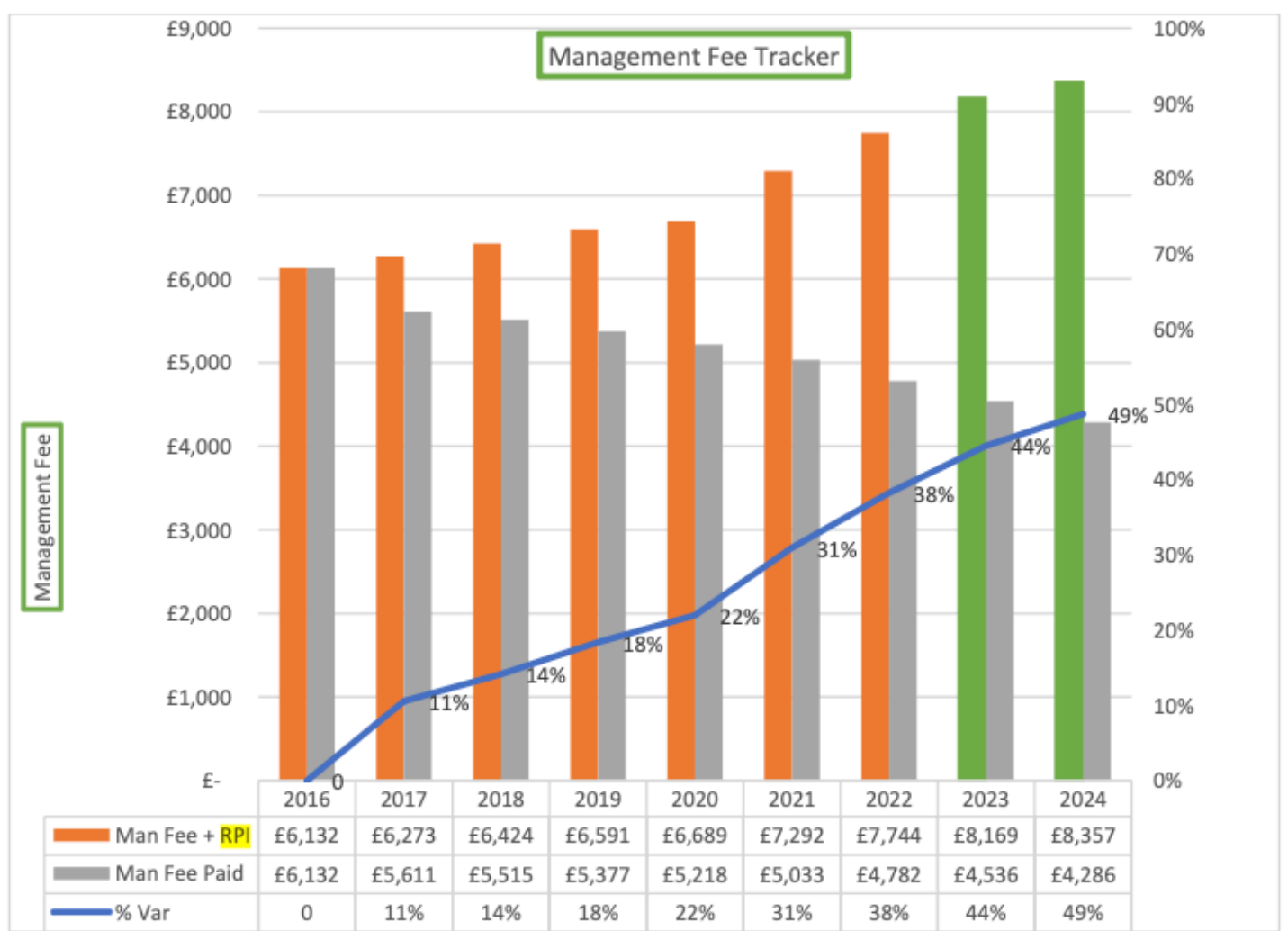
Local government investment has reduced by over 20% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2022/23.

This Peebles Community Council briefing looks at what the data say about the sustainability of Live Borders.

1. SBC – payments to Live Borders halved

SBC's own figures from Nov 2023 [ref. 2 page 12] show SBC halving their payments to Live Borders:

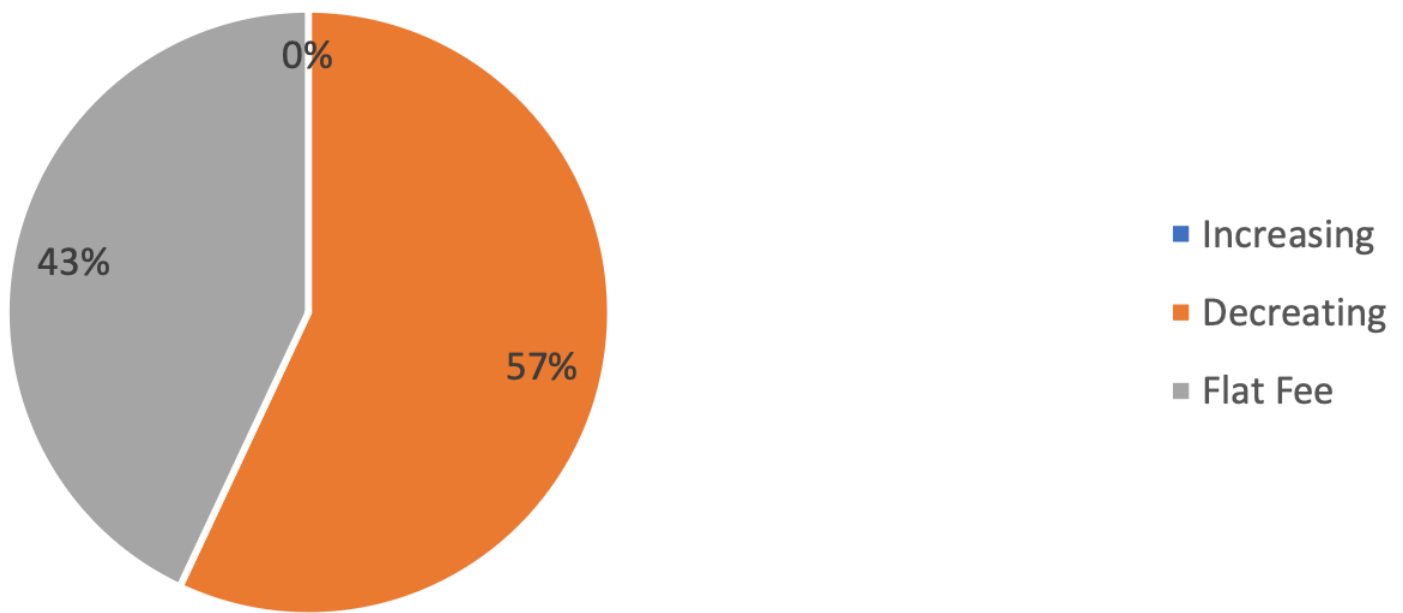
- Grey bars show SBC's payments to Live Borders
- Coloured bars show what those payments should have been to keep pace with inflation
- Blue trend line is the shortfall (gap between grey and coloured bars), reaching 49% in 2024



SBC's same report [ref. 2 page 15] described the financial pressures on the 2023/24 management fee to trusts in Scotland as

50% had a flat management fee and the other 50% reduction in Management Fee ranging from 5-33%

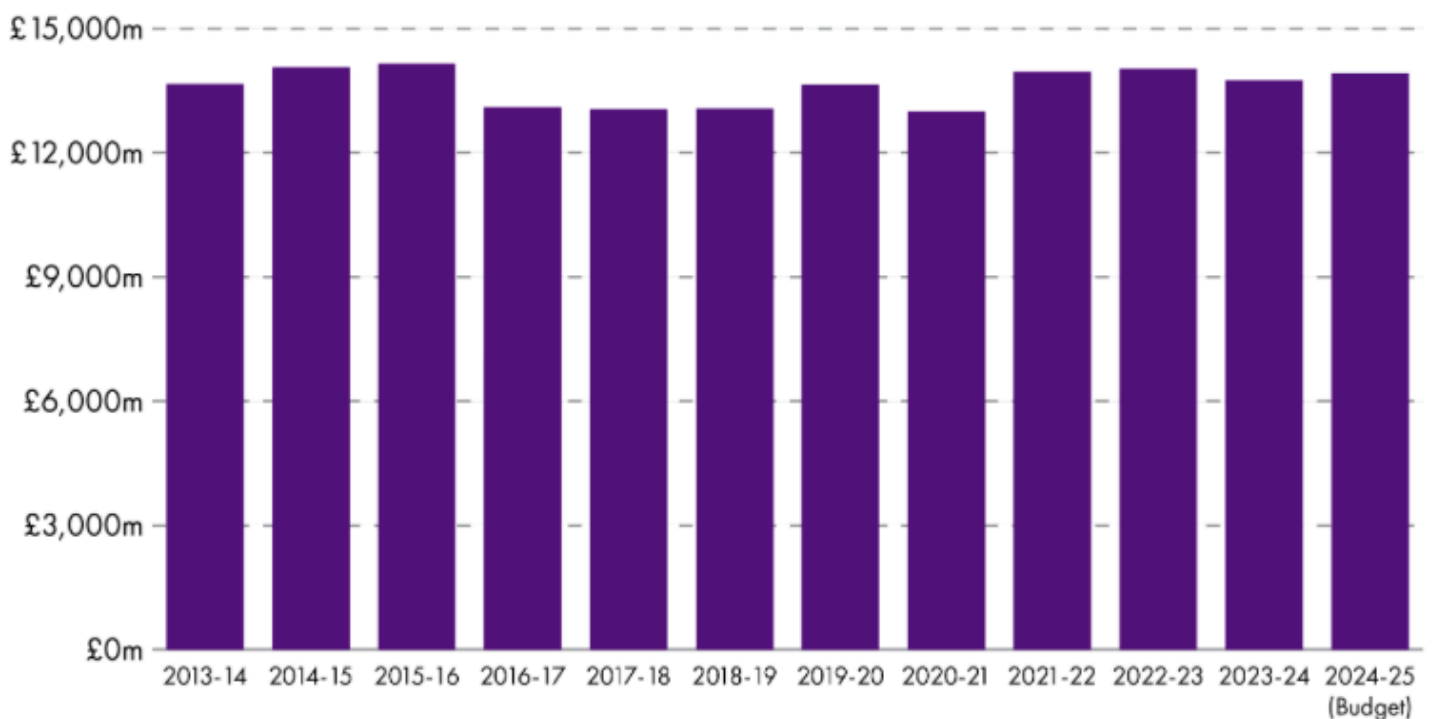
Similarly, Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) State of The Market Survey 2021 [[ref. 2 pg 14](#)]:



2. Scottish Government – councils get 2% more than 2013/14

Latest official Scottish Government data [[ref. 4 chart 2](#)] show payments to local authorities 2% higher in 2024-25 than 2013-14 in real terms:

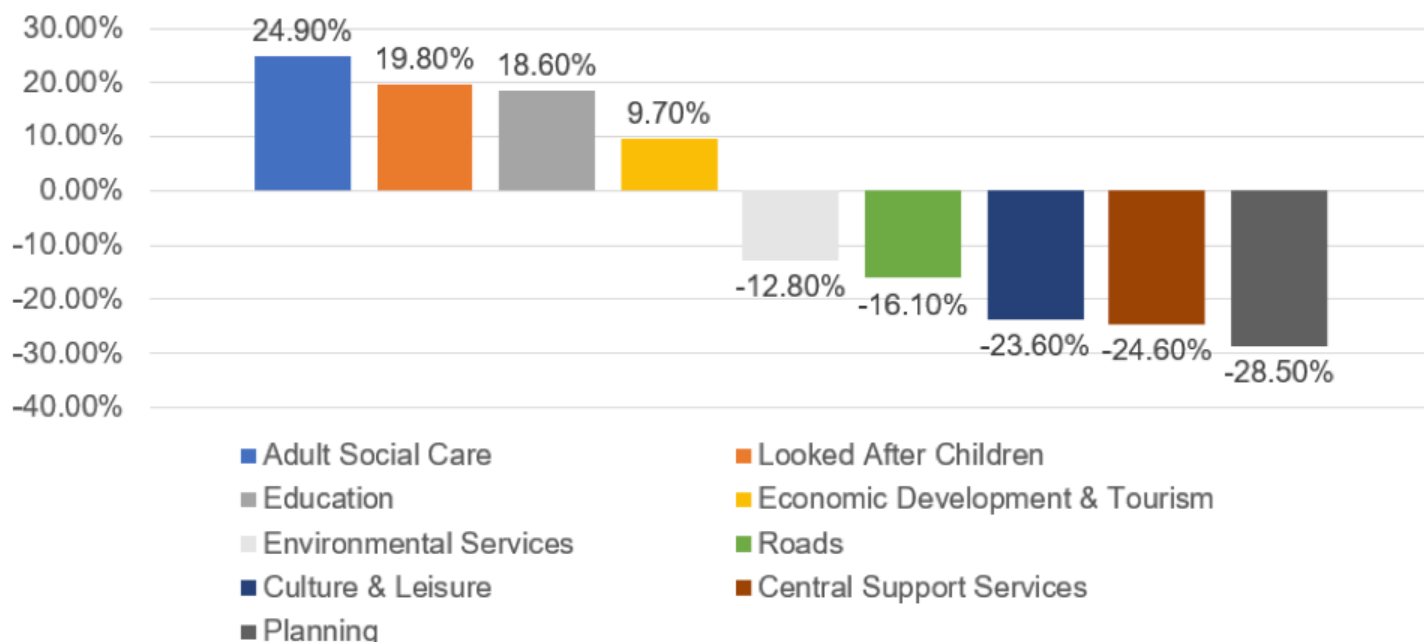
- Overall settlements from the Scottish Government since 2013-14 (real terms, 2024-25 prices, £m)
- Includes revenue and capital items, but does not include extra funding to cover the council tax freeze



3. Other councils reduced sport & leisure far less than SBC

COSLA show [\[ref. 5\]](#) real terms spending changes (avg over all 32 councils) by service 2010/11–2021/22:

- Spending increased in areas ring-fenced by Scottish Government and decreased elsewhere
- Overall authorities reduced real terms Culture & Leisure spending 23.6% between 2010/11 – 2021/22
- Which was less than half of SBC's reported 49% real terms reduction between 2016–2024.



CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Local Government Directors of Finance (Scotland) group have produced a report [\[ref. 6\]](#) on the challenges facing scottish authorities

Against the backdrop of high inflation, wage pressures, a cost of living crisis, limited powers to raise revenue combined with increasing responsibilities and demand-side pressures, many local authorities have expressed concern about their capacity to meet statutory services and balance their budgets.

The [Convention of Scottish Local Authorities \(COSLA\)](#), the national association of all 32 Scottish councils, say [\[ref. 5 quoted in 4\]](#):

local authorities do much more now than they did in 2013–14, particularly with regards to early years provision, free school meals and adult social care. They argue that the costs of delivering these new or enhanced services far exceed any additional money allocated by Scottish Government over the period.

4. SBC's Nov 2023 full council meeting

4.1 Independent consultants' report & recommendations

The consultants' report [\[ref. 2 page 5\]](#) began by reminding SBC of its duty under section 14 of [The Local Government and Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#):

a local authority shall ensure that there is adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities

Describing challenges, the consultants issued a strong warning:

Discussions with the senior management and Board at Live Borders have noted the serious position that the Trust faces, with the current operational set up critically unsustainable. Without substantial changes to the income or the costs facing the organisation, **it is predicted that available funds and existing reserves will run out within the next financial year.**

This was so important it appeared in the Executive Summary:

Scottish Borders Council cannot continue to deliver their Culture, Sports, and Leisure provision sustainability in its current form without increasing the levels of investment.

The consultants made 26 recommendations [ref. 3] to generate income, streamline operations and move costs back to SBC.

4.2 Officer's report and recommendations – what SBC considered

SBC's 23 Nov 2023 meeting considered the officer's report [ref. 7] (the consultants' report was 1 of 11 appendices for item 6).

The officer's report does not include the consultants' warning that without substantial cost or income changes Live Borders will run out of funds and reserves within the next financial year:

"1.1 This report sets out a proposal for Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders to deliver high quality sport, leisure and cultural services, now and into the future, through a high performing and financially sustainable partnership, to be achieved by reviewing existing governance and reporting arrangements and undertaking a proposed 12-month joint transformational change programme."

"6.1 ... Live Borders are currently finalising updated financial forecasts for the current year. As the scale of financial implications become clear, officers will report back to Elected Members for approval of additional funding as required;"

Similarly, councillors considered the consultants' 26 recommendations [ref. 3] as amended with the officer's "additional explanatory narrative. Some recommendations have been strengthened". For example:

#	Priority	Recommendation	Response / officer's recommendation
P1	Critical	All repairs and maintenance responsibilities relating to council owned buildings, currently leased to Live Borders, reverts to Scottish Borders Council.	Amend ... Agree to conduct a review of other Trust models/best practise and work with Live Borders to identify the optimum model which should be reflected ...
P3	High	When the current energy provider contracts expire in March 2024, that the responsibility for all future utilities and energy costs transfers to the Council.	Do not agree ... Agree to closer align Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders financial planning processes and use the same budget assumptions for energy costs.

Councillors followed the strengthened recommendations of the Director of Resilient Communities without amendment.

The following month SBC agreed a bailout, reported at the time and subsequently:

- [Live Borders £1.5m bail-out agreed by councillors](#) Borders Telegraph 19 Dec 2023
- [Council cannot be 'bank of mum and dad' to Live Borders](#) Southern Reporter 10 Apr 2024
- [Council agrees way forward for struggling sports trust](#) BBC 25 Jun 2024

5. SBC commended for delivering planned savings

The Accounts Commission highlighted [SBC's track record of delivering planned savings](#) on the [17 Dec 2024](#). The commission said:

The Commission will watch with interest as to whether the change fund approach delivers the required payback and recurring savings at the pace required. The Commission would urge the council to strengthen its reporting on its transformation programme milestones and expected benefits, as well as **ensuring the community is engaged with its transformation agenda**.

If you have comments on SBC's transformation agenda, [submit your comments to SBC's consultation](#).

6. References

1. SBC [Live Borders agenda item 6, 23 Nov 2023](#) minute and attachments
2. SBC [Interim report appendix 3 annex 1, 23 Nov 2023](#)
3. SBC [Interim report appendix 1, 23 Nov 2023](#)
4. Scottish Government [Local Government Finance: Facts and Figures 2024](#)
5. [COSLA and Directors of Finance Submission to Inquiry into Budget Scrutiny 2024:25: Funding for Culture](#).
Also [Scottish Parliament LGHP Report Jan 2024](#)
6. CIPFA report [Balancing Local Government Budgets in Scotland](#) Oct 2024.
Also [press release](#)
7. SBC [Live Borders – Joint Strategic Review of Sport, Leisure and Cultural Services and Facilities Report](#), Director – Resilient Communities
8. Integratis [Borders Sporting and Cultural Estate Review Report](#) 18 Apr 2025,
<https://integratisconsulting.com>

Terms:

- DEL = Departmental Expenditure Limits
- Fiscal = Govt revenue, especially taxes, but also NDRI
- NDRI = Non Domestic Rates Income

The [latest version of this report is available on the PCC website](#)

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