

Peebles & District Community Council Chairman's Report - January 2023

1.0 General

We have a full agenda and as we have been moved temporarily from the Burgh Hall, we are tied to being out of the Drill Hall by 21:00. We therefore need to keep a tight rein on our discussions and be concise.

There is always an argument to delay an item and move it into the next month. Sometimes this may work and sometimes it just creates a logjam later. Consequently, it will be helpful if where we can, we issue advance reports like this one and approve where we can and discuss where we must. I doubt anyone wants three-hour meetings, or more than one a month!

At the last meeting Councillor Thomson proposed a joint West Tweeddale report. We could have one from the East as well. All reports, as I have done with the planning report would need to be issued by Monday at the latest on the week of the PCC meeting.

2.0 PCC Officers

The writer is content to keep working on planning for the time being and Fiona Richardson has kindly offered to deputise for Anne Snoddy as Secretary when required. Graham Mackie has kindly volunteered to act as Vice Chair where required.

3.0 Peebles Parking Working group

George Ramsay and Scott Watson now represent us on this committee. However, as Chair I observe the following.

- New parking charges are being introduced for those car parks currently charging and maintaining the same times. This leaves the following to be considered.
 - Should all car parks charge or not as the case may be including those owned by the Common Good?
 - What periods should the charges cover?
 - Has the revenue due to the Common Good been calculated and what actions are proposed in relation to it?
- Any outline proposal appertaining to a possible move of the bus stops away from the High Street need to be promulgated widely and a proper consultation held with the residents of Peebles. It would not be possible for PCC to be the sole consultee.
- Holistic Traffic Issues
 - Traffic around the town
 - Parking both SBC and Common Good car parks and on streets
 - Pedestrians
 - Cyclists
 - Buses
 - Taxis
 - Park and ride

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- Shopping traffic
- School transport
- Road capacity
- ????

4.0 Common Good

Your Chair has informed the Common Good Chair, Councillor Tatler that George Ramsay is to replace Peter Maudsley as the PCC representative from now on. This does not appear to have been actioned at this time.

It cannot have escaped anyone's notice that a rather personal attack has been made both in Peeblesshire and by direct email relating to the questions raised by PCC. Your Chair's response is an addendum to this report and thus a matter of record. The response should also be printed in Peeblesshire on its next publication date. This writer considers that this should be the end of the affair.

Joe Wilton and his group sent me the following. I think it is something we can support even if we don't have the resource to become actively involved.

Our group (ex of Jedderfield Farm) have conducted a straw poll of Peebles residents. This is what we found.

- *A significant minority had not heard of the Peebles Common Good.*
- *Of those that had heard of the Common Good the vast majority thought the Common Good belonged to the "people of Peebles", "the community" or a similar term.*
- *There was considerable confusion about who was involved in the management of Peebles Common Good - was it, Peebles Community Council, Peebles Community Trust, Scottish Borders Council? Only one respondent named the elected local councillors.*
- *Only a minority of those who had heard of the Peebles Common Good could name any of the 40 fixed assets that currently make up Peebles Common Good.*

We believe these findings, and the fact that SBC recently produced an updated and more accurate list, with maps, of Peebles Common Good assets (requested by Scottish Government, not initiated by SBC) are the 2 reasons why we think now is the time to hold a public Exhibition - to inform and celebrate what belongs to the people of Peebles.

The Exhibition will be a factual (non-judgemental) description of Peebles CG, giving history, background, listing the fixed assets and some information about CG grant giving for local causes (very difficult to find on the SBC website).

Lastly, as you know from the CG meeting of 23 Nov, Robin Tatler has proposed a Q&A's session following the CG meeting on 1-March 2023. We hope the Exhibition will encourage people to ask informed questions that they may have for this meeting. We are not looking for an endorsement from the PCC, but any observations that you have on the above proposals would be appreciated.

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5.0 Heathpool Forest Long-Term Forest Plan

You should all have seen the information provided on the above. From the writer's perspective, I see no problem. However, if anyone has any observations, we need to know about them.

6.0 Halyrude School

At the last count, there were more than 60 objectors on the planning portal. This includes a significant objection by the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland which does not approve at all of the proposed external changes to both building and playground.

I attended the Parents Council meeting along with Councillors Julie Perone and Drummond Begg. I also had feedback from a couple of our PCC members.

The first issue that I felt I needed to know was, was it SBC pushing this or was the proposal generated by the schools themselves. It seems clear that this is an SBC project and certainly so far as Halyrude parents are concerned, not welcome. There had been no consultation with the parents. The changes proposed will possibly benefit the Leader Valley children of whom there are 12 and most definitely disadvantage the Halyrude children of whom there are circa 100.

In terms of the overall arguments there are two subject areas. Firstly, all the perceived negatives including the loss of some space, potential health, and safety issues, etc. as you will have seen from previously circulated documents. This writer does not propose that we get involved with this directly as some issues raised are solvable, whilst others may be. Some issues however are not. The second perception real or imagined is that this is designed to undermine denominational education. This is far too emotive and divisive a subject, again for us to get involved with.

We do not know on what basis SBC has thought these changes necessary. Perhaps they have sound arguments. However, there appears no attempt to explain the proposals. Further, the writer considers the documentation online poorly worded and thin on content and hardly makes mention of Halyrude school.

The proposal as seen is purely a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application. We are not aware of any operational plans that would include for example, Risk Assessments, toilet improvement plans, effects on education, security, fire risk, etc.

There are issues of concern that I have identified below:

SBC appear to have ignored the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. I have picked out bullets below

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- The Act is about improving parents' involvement in their own child's education and in schools more generally.
- It aims to help schools, education authorities and others to engage parents meaningfully in the education of their children
- Both education authorities and Parent Councils must have regard to the guidance in carrying out their functions under the Act.
- The education authority must seek and take account of the views of all those with an interest in the authority's implementation of its duties,
- In meeting their duties under the Act, education authorities must take account of issues of equality and the requirements of equalities legislation. They must have regard to how their strategy for parental involvement will promote equal opportunities. This should include issues of diversity and equality so that children and their families are not discriminated against on grounds of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, faith ----
- All parents who have a child attending a public school are automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school. Membership of the forum allows parents to have a say in the local arrangements to enable their collective view to be represented on matters such as the quality and standards of education at the school and other matters of interest to parents. These views can be represented, as appropriate, to the headteacher of the school, the local authority and HMIE.
- A person, or someone acting on their behalf, may make a complaint, in connection with how the authority carries out, or fails to carry out, its functions under the Act (s15).

There is additionally a question as to why Catholic Ukrainian children were not given the opportunity of joining the Halyrude school roll. SBC officers have answered the queries made by elected councillors to say that the opportunity was offered. The local priest, Father Tony who is in direct contact with the families is convinced that the offer was not made. This may be a lack of understanding caused by language. However, the issue does require to be clarified one way or the other

Operational issues. To highlight just one item. There are under the proposal, 3 toilets upstairs for 100 children and additional staff. There are about 15-20 downstairs for 12+

We have offered an invitation for the parents or a representative to speak at our January meeting.

This writer posted a comment on the Planning Portal that reflects some of the above. However, the planning application is a separate issue from the educational management and could go through on that basis.

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7.0 Enduro World Series

At the last meeting we touched upon the potential issues which may arise locally when there is a major sporting event held such as the EWS. It was suggested that we contact Enduro so that they could meet with us and explain how the event is to be organised.

As PCC Chair, and in the light of recent events, I believe it is important to stress that the Community Council is entirely supportive of the event. However, no one can deny that it will have some sort of impact on the community whilst it is being held. The writer has given this some thought and considers the following.

At these events, there is a dual responsibility on the organisers', in this case Enduro and the local authority, SBC. The event is not too distant and the writer considers that SBC would by this time have appointed a coordinator to oversee the arrangements being made and whose job was to ensure that all aspects that require to be managed will in fact be managed effectively. Too late when the event is taking place to resolve any deficiencies. It is this coordinator who should speak to the Community Council. Indeed, the writer would expect that representatives of both Innerleithen and Peebles Community councils would be invited to take part in any meetings of importance both to be able to allay any fears the community may have and to possibly identify any issues not thought of by other participants.

The following are some of the subject areas that spring to the writer's mind:

- Traffic (expected increase above normal)
- Traffic congestion and possible effect on emergency vehicles
- Parking (both for competitors and spectators)
- Parking (effects on the town)
- First aid
- Evacuation for injured competitors
- Policing (Traffic, pickpockets, bike theft)
- Camping
- Camper Vans
- Toilet Facilities (On site, for campers, for vans and around the town)
- Etc.

We request that elected councillors ask the relevant questions as raised by this item and let us know what if anything is being done.

Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council